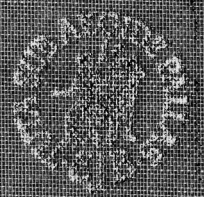
PRATAPADITYA PAL

THE ARTS OF NEPAL

PART I

SCULPTURE



HANDBUCH DER ORIENTALISTIK

SIEBENTE ABTEILUNG

III. BAND, 3. ABSCHNITT, 2. LIEFERUNG

I

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HANDBUCH DER ORIENTALISTIK

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THE ARTS OF NEPAL, I

LEIDEN/KÖLN
E. J. BRILL
1974

THE ARTS OF NEPAL

BY

PRATAPADITYA PAL

PART I

SCULPTURE

With 300 plates

LEIDEN/KÖLN
E. J. BRILL
1974

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All art originates in the human mind, in our reactions to the world rather than in the visible world itself, and it is precisely because all art is 'conceptual' that all representations are recognizable by their style.

E. H. GOMBRICH, *Art and Illusion*

To the memory of my father
Sri Gopesh Chandra Pal
(1900–'70)

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

When the Board of Research Studies of the University of Cambridge requested me in 1965 to act as external examiner of a thesis for the Ph. D. degree entitled *Sculpture and Painting of Nepal* I was greatly looking forward to reading this work, as I was almost certain that it would contain a considerable amount of new material in a field of Indological studies in which very little research had been done so far. When the thesis arrived my expectations turned out to be fully justified. The oral examination and the days afterwards were crammed with lively discussions between Dr Pal and myself. As I felt his material was extremely important, I asked him to prepare his thesis for the press as soon as possible, which he promised to do, and in return I undertook to get the book published.

In the years that followed personal circumstances prevented Dr Pal from keeping his promise but the delay has had the advantage that in the mean time more new material has come to light so that the picture of Nepalese sculpture now presented in this book is more complete than it could have been six or seven years ago.

Meanwhile Dr Pal, who has had the privilege of starting his studies under the guidance of that fine scholar, my late lamented friend and colleague Professor Jitendranath Banerjea of Calcutta University, has published many important books and articles and has built up an international reputation for himself. After leaving Cambridge where he studied under Dr Allchin he returned to India for a brief spell and then joined the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, an institution famous among Indian art historians, since it was here that Dr Coomaraswamy, the greatest authority on Indian art, wrote his many important publications which have contributed so much to the knowledge and better understanding of South Asian art. Dr Pal is now Curator of Indian and Islamic art in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and his department is rapidly becoming one of the most important collections of Indian art in the world. We hope that Dr Pal in spite of his heavy responsibilities will soon be able to complete the companion volumes to the present book. The second volume will deal with Nepalese painting and the third with Nepalese architecture. Both volumes will likewise contain a great deal of new and highly important material. Readers of the present publication will therefore undoubtedly be looking forward to them eagerly.

J. E. VAN LOHUIZEN-DE LEEUW

University of Amsterdam, autumn 1973

PREFACE

This is the first of a three-volume work on the arts of Nepal and is concerned exclusively with sculpture. The second part, which will follow soon, will be devoted to painting; the third part to architecture. In selecting my material I have limited myself to the valley of the Bagmati, the cradle of Nepali culture, and of which I have a first hand knowledge. Moreover, the materials excavated in recent years in the Nepali Terai are not yet easily accessible to scholars outside the Department of Archaeology at Kathmandu.

When I began the study of Nepali art in 1959, less than a dozen articles of any significance had been written about the subject. Most of these articles either asserted that the sculptural tradition in Nepal was not very old, or they stressed the strong influence exerted by Pāla sculpture on that of Nepal. My initial visit to the country in 1959 had already convinced me that both assertions were untrue, and subsequent discoveries make the Nepali sculptural tradition at least as old as the third century A.D. A wider interest in the arts of Nepal has developed since 1964 when the Asia Society in New York organized an exhibition and Dr. Stella Kramrisch published her catalogue, *The Art of Nepal*. Since then a number of publications and articles have appeared, but because of the inherent conservatism of the Nepali tradition, dating of sculpture, particularly of bronzes, still encourage wild speculations. In the present work I have carefully attempted to establish a firm chronological framework, and the method may profitably be applied to the study of Indian sculpture, where also a similar speculative trend prevails.

This book has grown out of my Ph.D. thesis on the *Sculpture and Painting of Nepal*, submitted to the University of Cambridge in 1965, while I was a graduate student at Corpus Christi College. I wish to record my profound sense of gratitude to my supervisor at Cambridge, Dr. F. R. Allchin, who has contributed more than any other teacher in broadening my intellectual horizon. I wish also to mention my indebtedness to Prof. (Dr.) J. E. van Lohuizen-de Leeuw of the University of Amsterdam, who has always taken a keen and personal interest in my work. In addition she has very kindly read through the entire manuscript and I have profited immensely from her many suggestions. Porter A. McCray, Director of the JDR 3rd Fund and his assistant Mrs. Elizabeth Glaeser have remained a constant source of encouragement for my work on Nepali art, and to them and to the trustees of the Fund, I remain

grateful for two grants that enabled me to see the American collections in 1964 and undertake a field trip to Nepal in 1966. I should also like to record my indebtedness, which will be apparent throughout the book, to the works of two eminent art-historians, E. H. Gombrich and Kenneth Clark. I had the good fortune to discuss certain aspects of my thesis with Prof. Gombrich while he delivered the Slade lectures at Cambridge in 1962-63. Those lectures on Leonardo da Vinci were an unforgettable experience, while Lord Clark's exhilarating book, *The Nude*, has influenced my own thinking and writing profoundly.

In Nepal, my thanks are due primarily to the family of my friend, Raj. K. Simha, whose home in Kathmandu has always been like a second home to me. Among others who have helped me on my many trips to Nepal, I should especially like to mention J. B. Bista, Prashiddha Rana, Siva Rana, and Gautamvajra Vajracharyya, a brilliant young scholar, whose works in *Pūrṇimā* are invaluable sources of Nepali history. A very special word of thanks is due to Dr. Mary Slusser, who has been engaged in research in Nepali culture for the last five years. I cannot adequately express my appreciation for her generosity in sharing her materials with me, which I have specifically indicated in the text, and for providing me ungrudgingly with excellent photographs.

It remains for me to thank Mrs. Doris Bryant and my two colleagues, Mrs. Marilyn Wyman and Miss Rochelle Yeker, for diligently preparing the typescript of the entire manuscript with great care. Without their sympathy and patience, this work may still have remained unpublished.

A final word about the system of diacritical marks followed in this book. No marks of any kind have been applied to place names, either Indian or Nepali, that are in current usage. Names such as Sarnath, Bhadgaon, Pashupatinath or Svayambhunath (the last two when used as place names as distinct from deities they represent) have not therefore been unnecessarily burdened with accent marks.

Los Angeles PRATAPADITYA PAL

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All photographs, except those acknowledged below, were taken by the author. I am particularly indebted to individuals and institutions listed below for supplying me with photographs and giving me permission to reproduce them. In addition, I would like to thank Mr. Edward Cornachio and Mr. Joe Hazan of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for their cheerful cooperation in preparing prints from my negatives.

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INTRODUCTION

I

The Kingdom of Nepal stretches like an uneven parallelogram across the Himalayas. Beyond its lofty mountain peaks and ranges in the north is the plateau of Tibet; in the south the Nepali Terai leads gradually to the vast Gangetic plains of India. Because of the inaccessible as well as impassable Himalayan barriers, the northern frontiers of Nepal have allowed a limited infiltration of culture, mostly in the wake of trade and commerce. The southern frontiers, on the other hand, from times immemorial, have proved to be less formidable. Consequently, there was a constant and steady flow of both ethnic and cultural streams from the Indian plains into Nepal, and this has inexorably shaped the general pattern of Nepali life, both material and spiritual.

Roughly in the middle of the Kingdom is a picturesque valley, surrounded by mountain ranges and drained by a network of streams which combine into a single river to rush out by a gorge in the south. The traditional name of this valley is Nepal. Perhaps, due to its central geographical situation and relatively easier accessibility from the south, this valley of the river Bagmati (or the Kathmandu valley, as it is frequently called) has remained the nerve centre of the country. It is in this crucible that the various ethnic and cultural elements have commingled over two millennia, to be replenished from time to time by fresh cultural waves from India. The works of sculpture discussed in the following pages were created almost exclusively in this valley.

Considering the size of the country, its ethnic composition is complex, but the people predominantly responsible for all ostensible aesthetic adventures are the Newars. Their origin is obscure, and their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family with strong influences of Sanskrit, evident especially in literary Newari. Constant intermingling with immigrants, particularly from India, has prevented any one racial type being prominent among the Newars, but generally they belong to the Mongoloid stock. Agriculture and trade form their two most important means of subsistence, and, as a rule, they are a very urbane people, delighting in the patronization of the arts.

The Newars must have been among the earliest people in the valley to embrace

Buddhism as every Newari proudly claims descent from the family of Śākya.[1] They were probably among the earliest settlers in the valley, which is evident from recurring place-names in the early epigraphical records that apparently relate to Newari. A very closely-knit group of people, they still maintain a sense of ethnic solidarity, which has ensured their survival despite onslaughts of imported Brāhmaṇical culture.

Although today the Newar society is divided into a Hindu and a Buddhist section, these words are quite unfamiliar to them, and they refer to themselves either as followers of Buddha (Buddhamārgi) or as followers of Śiva (Śivamārgi). The distinction does not appear to be of too great an importance and is not very clearly defined. Certainly, it is not valid among the substratum of the society. What is significant for us is the fact that the artisan communities belong exclusively to the Buddhist section. This has no doubt partly ensured the application of a uniform concept of aesthetics to both Hindu and Buddhist art (and architecture), for the same styles are employed to carve a figure of Śiva and another of Avalokiteśvara. The difference primarily is in the iconography, and even there one finds a considerable amount of commingling.

As a general rule the artists in India and Nepal belonged to the lower strata of society. According to the hierarchy of sub-castes, categorized during the reign of Sthitimalla in the fourteenth century, craftsmen (*śilpikāra*) are placed below the tailors, cooks and confectioners, while wood-carvers (*dārukāra*), coppersmiths (*tāmrakāra*) and painters (*citrakāra*) are classified lower still.[2] In actual practice today, among the Buddhist Newars, metalwork is often done by the community of "bare" or "banre", who are second only to the "gubhāju", and form the highest vocational group on a par with the brahmins. A class of Newars, the products of intermarriage between a Tibetan woman and a Newar man and known as "urha", not only has a monopoly of trade with Tibet but forms the main metal casting and artisan community in that country. Thus, they may be considered to have been primarily responsible for the spread of Nepali artistic ideas to Tibet.

If the above information about the artists in Nepal seems sketchy, our knowledge about the patrons is even more limited. The traditional chronicles are filled with names of kings who commissioned works of art and built temples, but these merely

[1] For an excellent study of the Newar society, see C. von Furer-Haimendorf, "Elements of Newar Social Structure" in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 86, II, pp. 15ff. Much of the following information about the Newars is extracted from that article.

[2] L. Petech, *Medieval History of Nepal*, Rome, 1958, pp. 181ff.

provide us with a list. The only monarch who seems to have influenced the art of his time, or at least had left the impress of his powerful personality, is Viṣṇugupta of the seventh century. Almost a thousand years later, king Pratāpamalla displayed a rare antiquarian interest when he recovered a few monumental sculptures and, thereby, saved them from decay. It will also be argued in a subsequent chapter that king Mānadeva I of the Licchavi dynasty may have intentionally selected the theme of the striding Viṣṇu (Figs. 1, 2) for an icon worshipped by his mother. We also know that king Sthitimalla commissioned an image of Viṣṇu which conformed to the physical proportions of his deceased son. Such instances, however, are too scrappy to determine whether a patron really exerted a direct influence upon the aesthetic tastes or norms of his period. Perhaps, architecture is a better index, but, generally, the relation between a patron and an artist was essentially a commercial one, where the former commissioned an icon and the latter produced it following the prevailing mode of his time.

Whether commissioned or bought ready-made, as is still done, a sculpture was not chosen for aesthetic delectation but rather as a religious symbol. The acquisition of spiritual merit was not the prerogative of royalty alone, and patronage was extended equally zealously by the common man. The majority of the inscriptions record donations of icons and liṅgas by people that make no claim to royalty. We also have the testimony of the Chinese visitors during the Licchavi period that the average Nepali was inordinately fond of adorning his house with painting and sculpture. No doubt this predilection for interior or exterior decoration was partly to derive aesthetic pleasure, but it remains an indisputible fact that, both in India and Nepal, a sculpture, in the form of an image, was primarily commissioned to acquire spiritual merits.

II

The tenuous threads of the early history of Nepal are woven into a maze of myths and legends. The *Vaṁśāvalī* (traditional chronicles of Nepali kings), by themselves unreliable as historical sources, name several dynasties, such as the Gopālas or Kirātas, who preceded the Licchavis, known from more trustworthy epigraphs. The Kirātas are an ancient and probably nomadic people who are known in Indian epic literature, but they are not specifically associated with Nepal.[1] The names of places

[1] There are reasons to believe that Kirāta tribes were inhabiting the valley before the Licchavis arrived and ousted them. See D. Vajracarya, "Licchavikālko itihāsmā kirātkālko prabhāv", *Pūrṇimā*, 17, pp. 1ff.

mentioned in the Licchavi inscriptions as well as a distinct ethnic stamp revealed by some early Nepali sculptures—as we will discuss later—do indicate, nonetheless, that, prior to the Licchavis, there were tribes of people in the valley that spoke a non-Sanskritic language. That Nepal was already trading with India by the time of the Buddha is evident from a reference in the *Mūlasarvāsthivādavinaya*, and, in his *Arthaśāstra*, Kauṭilya alludes specifically to the import of blankets from Nepal into the Magadhan empire.[1]

The history of Nepal begins to assume definite shape only from the middle of the fifth century A.D., when we have inscriptions of kings belonging to a Licchavi dynasty. And, incidentally, the earliest dated sculptures in the country also belong to the same epoch. From then on a plethora of epigraphical records help us to construct a less shadowy history of the country until the middle of the eighth century. In order to establish a chronological framework for convenient reference, the history of Nepal may be divided into three broad periods: Licchavi (ca. 300-800), Ṭhākurī (800-1200) and Malla (1200-1750). It may be mentioned, however, that there is no evidence to refer to the kings of the second period as Ṭhākurī. Nothing is known of their relation with the earlier Licchavis, although they may well be their descendents. The term Ṭhākurī has apparently been selected arbitrarily, but wanting a more appropriate designation, I will continue to use it simply to separate the Licchavi period from that of the Mallas.

Licchavi is the name of the eponymous hero of a clan, and, according to the geneological information furnished by the Pashupatinath inscription of Jayadeva II, the first king of the dynasty—a descendent of Licchavi—was known as Supuṣpa. He is said to have been born at Puṣpapura, usually identified with the capital of Magadha, Pāṭalīputra (modern Patna in Bihar). On this tenuous evidence the dynasty has been connected with the Licchavis of Vaiśālī,[2] a famous tribe of the time of the Buddha. Whatever the origin of the Licchavis, the first powerful personality to emerge as a historical figure is Mānadeva I of the fifth century. For the next three centuries at least, except for a brief interregnum in the early part of the seventh when Aṁśuvarman usurped power, a prince of the Licchavi dynasty sat on the throne, although he did not always wield authority. The most celebrated Licchavi after Aṁśuvarman was Narendradeva, who restored the fortunes of the dynasty sometime before A.D.

[1] S. Lévi, *Le Népal*, Paris, 1905, II, p. 181; *Arthaśāstra*, 2, II, 30.

[2] The *Paśupati Purāṇa*, although a late text, does mention, however, that the Licchavis are from Vaiśāli.

jitvā kairātarājān vākyena pratyayena ca /
kariṣyati tadā rājyam vaiśālyādhipatirbali //18, 12.

D. Vajracaryya (ed.), *Itihāsa-saṁśodhanko Pramāṇaprameya*, Kathmandu, 1960-61, I, p. 206.

650 by overthrowing Viṣṇugupta. It appears that immediately following the rule of Aṁśuvarman political power was seized by the feudal Guptas, who became the *de facto* rulers, while puppet Licchavis sat on the throne. As we will have occasion to see, Viṣṇugupta was very likely an avowed follower of Viṣṇu and may have been responsible for some of the monumental sculptures in the valley.

It was during the reign of Narendradeva (ca. 645-685) that the Chinese ambassador, Wang Hsüan-tse, twice visited the Nepali court. The beginning of diplomatic relations with the Chinese emperor not only signifies the increasing authority of Narendradeva, but may have been motivated by his desire to gain official recognition from China and thereby consolidate his position. Equally cogent is the likelihood that both Nepal and China deemed it prudent to seek a political alliance due to the menacing activities of the newly elected Tibetan king Songtsen-gampo, who is said to have defeated both the Chinese and the Nepalis and celebrated his victories by accepting a princess from each court. The increasing prestige of the Licchavi dynasty during this period is also attested by matrimonial alliances with powerful royal houses of India. Śivadeva II, the son and successor of Narendradeva, wed Vatsadevī, the daughter of Bhogavarman of the Maukhari dynasty of Kanauj and the favourite grand-daughter of Ādityasena of Magadha. Śivadeva's son Jayadeva II took as his wife Rājyamatī, who belonged to the family of the famous Bhagadatta of Kāmarūpa and whose father, Śrī Harṣadeva, styled himself as the ruler of Gauḍa, Oḍra and Kaliṅga. More than his political achievements, however, Narendradeva is remembered by traditional chroniclers for having instituted the popular car-festival (*rathayātrā*) in honour of the yogī, Matsyendranātha, who became identified with Lokeśvara but is worshipped by the non-Buddhists as well.

There is no gainsaying the fact that, due primarily to influences from contemporary India, civilization in Nepal was raised to a palpably higher level during the long period of Licchavi rule. The relation between Licchavi Nepal and Gupta India was in many ways remarkably fruitful for the former. Among the more direct results may be considered the use of Sanskrit as the court language, the practice of issuing royal proclamations by stone inscriptions, the implementation of an administrative structure based evidently on the imperial administrative system, the introduction of monetary currency and, perhaps, a growing interest in the Vaiṣṇava religion, which had been so liberally patronized by the Gupta emperors. At the same time, it must be stressed that the early Licchavis did not adopt the Gupta era but continued to use the Śaka reckoning of A.D. 78. They also did not simulate Gupta coinage but preferred to imitate Kuṣāṇa coins, still in circulation in the country.

The period of the Licchavis was on the whole one of peace and prosperity. While an occasional incursion by the Tibetans was not an unlikely occurrence, there was none from India. It was certainly a period of expanding commerce as the Chinese sources particularly attest: "the merchants there, moving and stationary, are numerous; cultivators, rare." Increased trade with India, and possibly with China and Tibet, must have brought in a great amount of wealth, and this may well explain the efflorescence of Nepali sculpture in the seventh and eighth centuries, as we will see subsequently.

Few manuscripts of the period have survived, but from the epigraphic records it is evident that the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, the two popular Indian epics, were already familiar, certainly to the panegyrists and poets who composed the texts of the inscriptions. Equally familiar were the works of such poets as Kālidāsa or Bāṇa, for the influence of their literary style (*kāvya*) is apparent in the verses and the composition of Jayadeva's Pashupatinath inscription.[1] Indeed, Buddhakīrti, the composer of the text, was a man of considerable poetic talent and well-versed in *kāvya* literature. Jayadeva II himself appears to have been an accomplished poet, for he is said to have composed a few of the verses in the inscription, eulogizing Śiva. At any rate, Sanskrit was definitely the official language of the court, although the names of villages and localities mentioned in the inscriptions indicate that the common people very likely spoke a language more akin to Newari.

From epigraphical records we know the names of at least three palaces of the period: Mānagṛha, probably built by the great Mānadeva, Aṁśuvarman's Kailāsakūṭa and Bhadrādivāsa, the royal residence of Narendradeva. The Kailāsakūṭa palace appears to have been a particularly magnificent structure, for Aṁśuvarman claimed that people from all over the world stared at it with curiosity and amazement.[2] But the most flattering descriptions of the royal palace, and of art and architecture in general, may be gleaned from Chinese accounts. The *History of the T'ang Dynasty*[3] observes:

"Their houses are constructed of wood. The walls of these are sculptured and painted. They are very fond of scenic plays, they take pleasure in blowing trumpets

[1] R. Gnoli, *Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters*, Rome, 1956, I, pp. 115-19. A second poet's name and his verses extolling Dvaipāyana, the apocrypal author of the *Mahābhārata*, are also known from the Harigaon Pillar inscription. His name is Anuparama and he appears to have been openly hostile to Buddhism. (*ibid.*, p. 17)

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 52. *kutuhalijanatānimeṣanayanāvalokyamānāt kailāśakuṭa bhavanāt . . .*

[3] K. P. Jayaswal, "Chronology and History of Nepal", *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, XXII, 3, (1936), pp. 238-39.

and beating drums . . . They adore five celestial spirits, and sculpture their images in stone. Each day they wash them with purifying water. They roast a lamb and offer it in sacrifice.

"In the middle of the palace there is a tower of seven storeys roofed with copper tiles. Its balustrade, grilles, columns, beams, and everything therein are set with fine and even precious stones. At each of the four corners of the tower there projects a waterpipe of copper. At the base there are golden dragons which spout forth water. From the summit of the tower water is poured through funnels which finds its way down below, streaming like a fountain from the mouth of the golden Makara."

The keen and observant ambassador, Wang Hsüan-tse, adds the following account of the royal palace: "In the capital of Nepal there is a construction in storeys which has more than 200 *tch'eu* of height and 80 *peu* (400 feet) of circumference. Ten thousand men can find place in its upper part. It is divided in three terraces and each terrace is divided in seven storeys. In the four pavilions, there are sculptures to make you marvel. Stones and pearls decorate them."[1]

Important as the above excerpts are for the history of Nepali architecture, they clearly reveal that patronage of the arts was not the prerogative of the princes alone. With equal delight the commoners adorned their houses with painting and sculpture, and the Nepali sculptors were already encrusting their images with precious stones. It is worth emphasizing that the period of which the Chinese annals write is that of of the seventh and eighth centuries. As we shall see later it was one of the most creative periods in the history of Nepali sculpture.

III

Almost no information is available for the history of the country between the last known Licchavi monarch, Jayadeva II (ca. 750) and A.D. 879/880, the epoch of the Newari Era. Epigraphical records after Jayadeva stop abruptly, and it has been suggested that the period was marked by repeated foreign invasions. If this were true, the inauguration of the new era by Rāghavadeva may have been to celebrate the expulsion of the last vestiges of foreign dominance.

The successors of Rāghavadeva, commonly, but without reason, referred to by the dynastic name of Ṭhākurī, ruled until the beginning of the thirteenth century, when they were supplanted by the Mallas. Our knowledge of Ṭhākurī history consists of little more than a list of names of successive monarchs, culled mainly from manuscript

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

colophons. On several occasions two kings governed the realm conjointly (*dvairājya*), and, if the dubious *Vaṁśāvalīs* are to be believed, a few kings appear as forceful personalities in this list of shadowy monarchs. One of these was Guṇakāmadeva who enjoyed an exceptionally long reign of sixty-six years. He is said to have founded the city of Kathmandu and made lavish donations to temples. As a matter of fact, the erection and endowment of temples and monasteries as well as the consecration of icons, if we accept the evidence of the *Vaṁśāvalī*, seem to have been the favourite preoccupations of the majority of the Nepali kings.

The last years of Ṭhākurī rule (1180-1200) were characterized by anarchy and confusion. Nepal had already been divided into two kingdoms, and political emphasis now shifted alternatively between Bhadgaon (Bhaktapur) and Patan (Lalitapattana). Although under the Ṭhākurīs Bhadgaon began playing an increasingly eminent role, the political or the cultural importance of Patan was in no way undermined. With the systematic destruction of the famous Buddhist monasteries in eastern India—and because of it—Patan began to acquire some of their lustre and distinction, and blossomed forth into a centre of Buddhist religion and learning of considerable renown.

It was during the Ṭhākurī period that Brāhmaṇical culture became well entrenched in Nepal. Although Sanskrit continued to be used as the court language, we hear of no eminent poets or writers. The majority of the manuscripts—and a large number survive from this period—copy texts that were written much earlier in India. Tāntrism seems now to have struck firm roots into the soil, which must have been particularly receptive because of the heterogeneous character of Nepali society. Buddhist monasteries, with their organized church, must have played a significant role in the dissemination of tāntric ideas, not only in the valley but also in Tibet. For the Tibetans, Patan now replaced in religious importance the monastic cities of India.

The history of the Mallas may broadly be divided into two periods; that of the early Mallas from 1200 to 1480, and that of the three Malla kingdoms of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon until 1768, when the Gurkhās from the west conquered the valley. The term "Malla" is only conveniently applied to the monarchs who ruled over the valley for almost five centuries and a half. In point of fact, there were three dynasties of Malla rulers, but the exact relationship of one with the other is not clearly defined. Nor are we better informed of the origin of the Mallas or the circumstances which brought them into power.

The fourteenth century has a special significance in the history of Nepal. The first

half was characterized by repeated raids into the valley by the kings of western Nepal and of Tirhut. It has been suggested that during this troubled period Nepal may have at least nominally acknowledged the suzerainty of Alauddin Khalji, the Sultan of Delhi, perhaps as a diplomatic manoeuvre in the hope of warding off a possible invasion by the latter. But the country was not destined to escape a Muslim invasion, which appeared, with devastating effects, in 1349/50, led by Sultan Shamsud-din Ilyas of Bengal. Thus, the repeated incursions by the Tirhutiyas, the Khasa tribes and the Muslims may together have destroyed the majority of the magnificent buildings which had once impressed the Chinese ambassador, Wang Hsüan-tse.

This prolonged exposure to external invasions considerably weakened the political machine, and internal dissensions and intrigues became rampant due to the perennial jealousies and rivalries of the feudal aristocracy. It was not until the last quarter of the century that there appeared in Nepal an iron-fisted king, the powerful Sthitimalla, who became the undisputed monarch in 1382.

Having achieved the unification of the kingdom at a fairly advanced age, Sthitimalla ruled for only a little over a dozen years. Short as it was, his reign was characterized by a sustained effort at reorganization of the shattered kingdom. The unruly nobles were brought under control and their power effectively curbed, at least for the time being. He introduced a new system of weights and measures that was still in vogue until a few years ago. But the most radical reform undertaken by him was to re-organize the entire structure of society in a strictly Brāhmaṇical frame. He was obviously a champion of Brāhmaṇical culture, and this reform proved to be of far reaching consequences for the Buddhists in general and the Newars in particular. Despite his interference with the structure of Newar society, however, Sthitimalla was the first Malla to stir up a new sense of national consciousness that was to inspire the creation of a distinctively Nepali culture by which the country is recognized today.

The glory of the Mallas reached its zenith during the long and felicitous reign of Yakṣamalla (ca. 1428-1480), the grandson of the illustrious Sthitimalla. Yakṣamalla is the only known Malla king to have indulged in a policy of aggression beyond the valley, without, however, achieving any permanent conquest. His domestic policy is a curious admixture of wisdom and folly. He imported Bhaṭṭa brahmins from South India and entrusted to their care the management of the temple of Paśupatinātha. There are reasons to believe that this richly endowed temple had been involved in court intrigues even as early as the Licchavi period. Yakṣamalla's drastic action, which forbade the imported brahmins from marrying into local families, may have

been motivated by the desire to curb the tendency of the local brahmins to interfere in court politics. But of much greater consequence was his decision to replace Sanskrit with Newari as the court language. Although Sanskrit remained a language of sophistication, the acceptance of Newari fostered greater national consciousness and brought the rulers closer to their subjects. The long and peaceful years enjoyed by the country under his reign was particularly propitious for both art and architecture, as we will see later.

The measure of his monumental folly was the division of the kingdom, which his grandfather had spent a lifetime to unify, among his three sons. Perhaps, this was the only way of preventing a bloody war of succession among his sons after his death. But whether due to misplaced filial devotion, or as a measure of political sagacity, the kingdom was now divided into those of Bhadgaon, Kathmandu (which included the old kingdom of Patan), whence the glory of the town, and Banepa. Subsequently, Banepa was absorbed by Bhadgaon, and in 1603 Patan seceded from Kathmandu to become the capital of the third kingdom.

It would be fruitless to prolong this outline of the political history of the country by recounting a story that was characterized by unprofitable struggle and barren factions among these three kingdoms. This incessant internecine conflict ultimately aided the conquest of the valley by the king of Gurkhā, Pṛthivī Nārāyaṇ Shāh in 1768/9, whose descendents still rule the kingdom. But, now and again, the three kingdoms did have their share of enlightened monarchy, particularly in the seventeenth century, with Siddhinarasiṁha in Patan, Pratāpamalla in Kathmandu and Bhūpatīndra in Bhadgaon. In no other period of her history had Nepal's art and architecture been so lavishly and generously patronized as under the later Mallas. The majority of the existing temples are creations of this period, which is also rich in sculpture and painting. The kings apparently vied with each other in building activities as attested by the magnificent palaces and temples that adorn the Darbar squares in the three capitals.

IV

The urge to create a work of art in Nepal, as much as in India, was inspired by religion. The two systems of religion that have dominated the life of a Nepali are Śivaism and Buddhism. A remarkable synthesis has been achieved over the centuries between these two sects, primarily due to three factors: a) the diminutive size of the valley, which encouraged a spirit of co-existence and mutual respect, despite fric-

tions, b) the ethnic solidarity of the Newari community to whom the differences remained superficial and a matter for the pundits to wrangle over, and c) the similar ritualistic basis of tāntrism which ultimately pervaded both systems.

Traces of animism survive in the veneration of snakes, frogs and dogs, and in such hybrid forms of gods such as Bāgh-Bhairava, the patron deity of Kirtipur. The worship of trees has always remained an important part of the higher religions, and, along with the sophisticated cults, one also finds explicit survival of the worship of the numinous stone. In many of the major shrines, such as the temples of Guhyeśvarī, Dakṣiṇa-Kālī, Indrāṇī and others, the deity is symbolized only by an undressed piece of stone.

By the fifth century, when we have our first example of dated sculpture, the three principal flourishing cults were those of Śiva, Viṣṇu and the Buddha. Of the Śaiva sects, the oldest is that of the Pāśupatas, which is why, perhaps, in the most important temple Śiva is known as Paśupati. We know the names of at least two Pāśupata ācāryas of the seventh century, Pranarddana Prāṇkauśīka and Varāhasvāmī. Pranarddana must have been especially venerated during his life time, for twice he is addressed as "bhagavata", indicating almost a divine status.[1] The sect of the Pāśupatas goes back historically at least to the time of Patañjali (2nd century B.C.) in India, and its most illustrious reformer was Lakulīśa, who may have lived in the second century A.D. and was later deified.[2] The other two systems of Śivaism known in Nepal are the Trika of Kashmir, or rather in its later southern form of Āgamānta, and the Liṅgāyata or Vīraśaiva. Both these systems are strictly monistic and are not given to the worship of anthropomorphic icons but only of the symbolic phallus (liṅga) of Śiva. Thus, the Śaiva sculptures that we do find in Nepal, apart from the countless liṅgas, may be affiliated to the Pāśupata sect, which encourages the veneration of both the iconic and aniconic emblems.

The second major cult in Nepal is Viṣṇuism whose history goes back at least to the fifth century. Although the Licchavis are guardedly silent about their religious beliefs, certainly the great Mānadeva's mother was a devout Vaiṣṇavī. Mānadeva himself may also have been a Vaiṣṇava, although the *Vaṁśāvalī* claims that he had founded a Buddhist monastery which carried his name. At any rate, the Licchavi period was particularly propitious for Viṣṇuism, as I have pointed out elsewhere, and certainly the most avowed follower of Viṣṇu in the seventh century was Viṣṇugupta, the *de facto* ruler. Viṣṇuism may have flourished in Licchavi Nepal because of its pre-

[1] Gnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 79.
[2] J. N. Banerjea, *Development of Hindu Iconography*, (2nd ed.), Calcutta, 1956, p. 450.

eminence in Gupta India, where the sect received liberal patronage from the imperial Guptas. Viṣṇu seems always to have appealed to the martial caste, and particularly to conquering monarchs, for whom the heroic god has remained a symbol of regal valour.

Both the Pāñcarātra and Bhāgavata sects of Viṣṇuism are known in Nepal. To the Vaiṣṇava, Viṣṇu is the supreme god, who in essence is formless, but for the devotees assumes multifarious forms. There are two principal aspects of Viṣṇusm that relates to its art. In his role as a saviour of mankind, Viṣṇu manifests himself from time to time and descends on earth to save the faithful from the forces of evil. In these manifestations, known as *avatāra*, Viṣṇu assumes an appropriate heroic form and these themes have inspired some of the most impressive sculptures in Nepal. His other aspect is crystallized in hieratic iconic types, where his supreme or *para* form is represented, and he is shown invariably as a universal monarch in the company of his consort and his mount. In later Viṣṇuism, the divine child-hero Kṛṣṇa, who came to be identified with the celestial Viṣṇu, often assumed as important a status as Viṣṇu himself. In Nepal, although one solitary sculpture proclaims the prevalence of the cult of Kṛṣṇa as early as the Licchavi period, it seems to have become popular only during the age of the Mallas. For the history of Nepali sculpture the cult of the cowherd hero-god of Mathura remained relatively insignificant.

Although the Buddha was born in Lumbini, which is within the present political boundaries of Nepal, there is no evidence that either he or Aśoka, the princely apostle of Buddhism, visited the valley. However, despite the claim that the Buddha discouraged his monks from undertaking journeys into Nepal, Buddhism may have reached the valley by the time of Aśoka. At any rate, early Buddhism in Nepal must have been similar to that prevailing in India before the advent of Mahāyāna philosophy: strictly monastic and with the stūpa as the principal ritualistic symbol. In course of time the theological movements that modified or radically altered the religion in India must also have reached Nepal in successive waves. The Mahāyāna system, with its more catholic attitude and emphasis on the saviour concept, rapidly captured the imagination of a credulous and superstitious people, who found it easier to believe in an ostensible symbol, such as the image of the Buddha or a Bodhisattva, rather than grapple with abstract ideologies and the austerities of a monastic life.

According to Hsüan-tsang both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism were prevalent in Nepal. He informs us further that there were about 2,000 monks belonging to both the sects and that Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples touched each other. It must be remembered, however, that the Chinese pilgrim had no personal knowledge

of Nepal as he did not visit the country. The evidence of the *History of the T'ang Dynasty*, quoted earlier, no doubt indicates the prevalence of tāntric cults involving sacrifices. According to the Tibetan polygraphist, Tārānāth, the great Yogācāra philosopher Vasubandhu visited Nepal in the fourth century and initiated the people in the practice of *mantra*.[1] The glorious phase of Buddhism in Nepal, however, coincides with the decline of that religion in eastern India and Kashmir. Tārānāth is once again elucidative: "At the time of the seven Pāla kings the doctrine was very active in Magadha, Bengal, in Odivisa and other western districts and in Kashmir. Elsewhere except for scattered communities it was non-existent. In the small country of Nepal it was extremely active. In these places the Mantrayāna and the Mahāyāna were very strong, and though in general there were quite a large number of disciples (*śrāvakas*) all the kings and nobility honoured the Mahāyāna."[2]

It was no doubt during this period that Patan developed into a famous Buddhist university-town, modelled after Nalanda. Manuscripts of Buddhist texts in large quantities were not only brought into the country, but were also written and copied in the monasteries at Patan or Kathmandu. The majority of the iconographic manuscripts belong to this period, and, possibly, the texts were compiled at about this time. For it is only after the eleventh or twelfth century that tāntric forms begin to appear in profusion, whereas the art of the earlier period is characterized by rather simple iconography. Tibetan Buddhists in ever increasing numbers now began to crowd the monasteries of Nepal, and with them came artistic motives and iconographic types that added to the repertoire of the Nepali artist. At present, the four philosophical schools of Buddhism followed in Nepal are Svābhāvika, Aiśvarika, Kārmika and Yātnika, but in practice the religion is definitely on the wane.

V

Religious tolerance may be regarded as the most remarkable phenomenon of Nepali culture. As early as the fifth century, king Mānadeva's mother was a devout Vaiṣṇavī, his wife was a follower of Śiva, and Mānadeva himself may have raised a Buddhist monastery. It is generally true that whatever the personal sectarian belief of the monarch most kings, until about the time of Sthitimalla, extended their patronage to diverse religious establishments. But even if the kings were partial to one sect or another, the religious climate among the common people, particularly

[1] D. Snellgrove, *Buddhist Himalaya*, Oxford, 1957, p. 101.
[2] *Ibid.*

the Newars, must have been characterized by mutual reverence and tolerance for one another's gods.

Buddhist theologians were notorious for displaying sectarian bias towards other sects. If in the early stages they were content to show Brāhmaṇical gods often in attendance upon the Buddha, tāntric Buddhists conceived of innumerable deities who are constantly engaged in combating the evil embodied in Brāhmaṇical divinities. Perhaps, the most morbid expression of this prejudiced outlook is reflected in the following lines from the *Kṛṣṇa-Yamārītantra*: "The image of Yamārī, with one face and two arms, should be made from clay mixed with ashes from a funeral pyre of the flesh of a brahmin."[1]

I am not aware if a sculptor actually followed this injunction in practice, but icons displaying Buddhist divinities trampling upon vanquished Brāhmaṇical gods abound in Nepal. Nevertheless, in no way do they reflect the attitude of the average Buddhist, who was often unaware of the sectarian significance of such symbols. In actual practice, Vighnāntaka, who tramples upon Gaṇeśa, may coexist peacefully with Gaṇeśa in the same shrine. Revealing a curiously ambivalent attitude, the Buddhists recount a charming anecdote[2] justifying the worship of Gaṇeśa. We are told that once Oḍīyācārya invited all the gods to a festival except Gaṇeśa, who retaliated by creating mischief. Dispatched by Lokeśvara, the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha invented Vighnāntaka to subdue Gaṇeśa but ordained that henceforth Gaṇeśa must be invoked at the commencement of any work. Thus, there is nothing surprising in the fact that within the precincts of the celebrated Buddhist shrine of Svayambhūnātha stands a temple of Hāritī, who is worshipped by the Hindus as Śītalā. Equally indicative of a tolerant atmosphere is the fact that the Buddhist Newars are permitted, once a year, to worship the liṅga of Paśupatinātha. Hsüan-tsang's remark therefore that in Nepal the Hindu and Buddhist temples touch each other is both literally and figuratively true.

If Śiva is the most prominent of the Brāhmaṇical deities, to the Buddhists the most important is Lokeśvara. Ultimately, however, all these cults are seen to merge in the concept of Matsyendranātha, which is peculiar to Nepal. He remains the most classic instance of the metamorphosis of a yogī into a god, a yogī, so the chronicles tell us, supplicated and brought to Nepal with great ceremony to end a severe

[1] *brāhmaṇasya tu māṁsena citibhaṣmeṇa tanmṛdā / yamārīpratimā kuryyāt dvibhujamekavaktṛṇaṁ* // H. P. Sastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection*, I, Buddhist Manuscripts, Calcutta, 1917, p. 149.

[2] D .Wright, *History of Nepal*, Calcutta, 1966, p. 68.

drought.[1] Although subsequently he was identified with Lokeśvara, he must have been a national hero in his life time, and his transformation into a national god was inevitable.

Thus, despite the occasionally blatant exhibition of sectarian prejudice, the basic attitude of the common man is one of acquiescence, fostered not by an intellectual expansiveness but by a sense of genuine belief in the beneficient, and innate fear in the vindictive, nature of every god and spirit. Not only was this catholic spirit responsible for a mutual borrowing of iconic types, but the same aesthetic norms have moulded and shaped the sculptural forms of the various divinities. The difference between a Śaiva, a Buddhist or a Vaiṣṇava image is not in the style but only in the content.

It remains for me to say a few words about the method of study followed in this book. Because almost all sculptures in Nepal are religious objects, styles and norms have survived for incredibly long stretches of time. The task of dating a sculpture precisely is thus extremely difficult, and, yet, unless a work can be dated with reasonable certainty, it is impossible to appreciate its creative ambiance. In the first chapter, therefore, I have reviewed all datable material and have thereby established a chronological framework, which has remained a constant term of reference for all other sculptures discussed. Moreover, the sculptures have been grouped together according to their thematic unity, such as Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava, although it must be remembered that the same styles were employed, irrespective of iconographic differences, simply because the same artist was often responsible for carving an image of Śiva or of Viṣṇu. And, even if such a method has at times encouraged repetitiveness, only by comparing sculptures depicting the same theme can one distinguish the subtle stylistic changes that reveal the inventiveness of the sculptors. Nevertheless, it has been my constant endeavour not to overemphasize the importance of style in the study of an artistic tradition that was called exclusively to serve religious truths. All too often the study of art, rather than reveal the conceptual as well as aesthetic richness of the tradition, is enmeshed by the fragile cobwebs of stylistic trivia.

[1] For an excellent discussion regarding the concept of Matsyendranātha, see Snellgrove, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-14.

CHAPTER ONE

CORPUS OF DATABLE MATERIAL

I

Two sculptures in Nepal, both representing the theme of the Dwarf incarnation of Viṣṇu, bear identical inscriptions on their pedestals revealing a date corresponding to A.D. 467. One of these sculptures still stands in a paddy field on the bank of the river Tilganga near the temple of Paśupatinātha (Fig. 1), while the other, recovered from Lajimpat, is now preserved in the National Museum at Kathmandu (Fig. 2). The inscriptions are in exactly the same language and are inscribed in an identical fashion. The Sanskrit text may be rendered into English as follows:[1]

> Determined to do well for his mother, Rājyavatī, who is as generous as Lakṣmī, king Mānadeva, of ever-increasing virtues and of pious and untinted intentions, built a temple and installed therein, on this second day of the bright fortnight in the month of Vaiśākha in the year 389, an image of Viṣṇu vikrānta, admired by the gods and sages and lord of all the worlds.

The subject matter of both steles is the dramatic myth of Viṣṇu's incarnation as the Dwarf, more commonly known as Trivikrama or Vāmana avatāra. The inscriptions, however, refer to the form as Viṣṇu vikrānta or the striding Viṣṇu. Two more reliefs in the valley depict the same theme; one of these stands in the compound of the Nārāyaṇa temple at Changu (Fig. 3) and the other in that of Śikhara at Pharphing (Fig. 4). I have elsewhere discussed the iconological significance of these images,[2] but the Purāṇic story from which the artists must have worked may briefly be narrated here in order to better understand the theme.

Once Bali, the king of the demons (*asuras*), having achieved supremacy over the earth, decided to conquer the heavens. This alarmed the gods who approached Brahmā for advice, but, as on many a previous occasion, he sent them to Viṣṇu. The ever-obliging Viṣṇu, in order to save the gods, incarnated himself on earth as the dwarf (*vāmana*) son of Kaśyapa and Aditī. On hearing that Bali was about to perform a great horse sacrifice (*aśvamedhayajña*), the Dwarf decided to attend it. Heedless of

[1] R. Gnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 6.
[2] P. Pal, *Vaiṣṇava Iconology in Nepal*, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 30ff.

his preceptor Śukrācārya's warning, the proud Bali offered the Dwarf whatever the latter desired. The Dwarf requested for only as much land as he could cover with three steps, and, as his wish was granted, he metamorphosed himself into a cosmic giant, two of whose steps were sufficient to cover the universe. With the third step he dispatched Bali to the nether regions to the great relief of the gods.

It seems clear that all four reliefs depict identical incidents of the myth employing the same basic compositional scheme; the differences are in the emphasis of details and in the expression of a varying degree of dramatic intent. The composition in each is dominated by the striding figure of Viṣṇu, whose legs divide the rectangle diagonally into two triangular halves. The area of activity is confined to the lower triangle, where Bali, along with his wife, is shown making the gift, rendered by the traditional but symbolic act of pouring water. All the figures, whether participants in the drama or mere observers, are oriented towards the cosmic giant, who is unshakeable in his firmness and naturally occupies the centre of the composition. Lakṣmī and Garuḍa, the god's wife and mount respectively, are portrayed as devout observers in all the reliefs. Viṣṇu's right foot is adored by a *nāga* couple, while one of the *asuras* makes a vain attempt to contain him. Rāhu attends the god's left foot, a recalcitrant *asura*, probably Namuci, is hurled in the air, and the horse signifies the occasion. Thus, the narration, although synoptic in the typically Indian fashion, is nonetheless graphic and direct in the use of visual imagery.

It can be easily perceived that while the two inscribed steles (Figs. 1, 2) are stylistically more akin, the others differ considerably (Figs. 3, 4). Except for a nimbus, the main figure in the Changu relief is carved fully in the round, and the sculptor has made him more stable by placing his right foot firmly on a rest. In the Pharphing image the foot-rest is in fact a lotus, but as a result, both examples have lost some of the dramatic tension and excitement of the other reliefs. Indeed, in the two inscribed steles, the right foot, with its constrained and somewhat awkwardly delineated toes, more effectively conveys the sense of power and cosmic energy demanded by the theme. The three figures around the right foot of Viṣṇu in the two uninscribed reliefs (Figs. 3, 4) are distributed with a better sense of spacial organization; the figure clutching the foot looks far more comfortable than the same person in the inscribed steles, although there the artists were obviously more concerned with expressing the urgency of the situation (Figs. 1, 2). In contrast to the awkwardly perched Śrī in the two inscribed sculptures, a more elegant lady stands securely on the lotus in the Changu example, where she seems to have imbibed the grace and suppleness of the lotus stalk she holds. Perhaps, the most arresting figure in the

Changu relief (Fig. 3) is that of the horse. There is no pretension of a realistic representation, and yet, with amazing economy and restraint, the artist has created a perfectly credible form. The nobility of the animal is admirably expressed by the proud turn of his neck as he looks disdainfully at the *asuras* preparing his decapitation.

Of the four reliefs that at Pharphing (Fig. 4) is the most hieratic in the disposition of the figures and is concerned with a disciplined composition completely devoid of the dramatic intensity of the others. Nothing of the activity or the involvement of the figures in the cosmic event is evident here. Rather, each figure stands isolated and is as static and formal as the hero of the drama. The female figures seem to belong to the same tradition as the Banepa Devī (Fig. 232), which thus makes it difficult to date the sculpture earlier than the thirteenth century. The Changu stele (Fig. 3), although not as stiff and hieratic as the Pharphing example, reflects a far greater concern for balance and symmetry, again at the cost of dynamic movement and dramatic intensity, than the two inscribed reliefs. Stylistically, the figures in the relief seem more closely modelled to those in the Zimmerman plaque of 1004 (Fig. 30) and the two dated Sūrya images from Patan (Figs. 28, 29) than to the figures in the Tilganga or Lajimpat steles (Figs. 1, 2).

The inscriptions on both images unequivocally and in the same language state that in the year 389/A.D. 467, king Mānadeva consecrated an icon of Viṣṇu vikrānta for his mother, and there is no mention of two separate donations. Nor does the examination of the paleography reveal any significant difference that may suggest the possibility of one inscription being later than the other. *Prima facie*, therefore, there seems no reason why the two should not be accepted as contemporary works. We would then be forced to conclude that they are works of the same date but by different artists. While this would elucidate the stylistic differences, we would still have to explain why Mānadeva should have commissioned two images but recorded the consecration of one only.

It may be safely observed that the Tilganga stele (Fig. 1) and that at Changu (Fig. 3) are stylistically well apart, while the Lajimpat relief (Fig. 2) shares features with both. The giant Viṣṇu in both the Changu and Lajimpat images is similarly proportioned with tall, slim figures that seem to reflect a better understanding of the mature Gupta idiom, seen in dated sculptures of Sarnath in the second half of the fifth century. In the Tilganga relief he is squat and sturdy with strong shoulders and a broad chest, features that relate him more closely to the two royal portraits (Figs. 62, 64). Details such as the form of the crowns, the ornaments, the dhoti as well as the swaying ends of the sash are rendered alike in the Changu and the Lajimpat

reliefs. In the Tilganga stele the sash falls below the thighs in a distinctive and rather naturalistic fashion, as if the sculptor felt no necessity to contrive the stylized effect employed by the other artist to enhance the sense of movement. This is also apparent in the way the garland (*vanamālā*) is brought over the left thigh in the Tilganga image where it appears to be involved in the motion of the leg. Its treatment in the Lajimpat example is certainly more flat, while the sculptor of the Changu relief has dispensed with it altogether. An interesting iconographical detail seen only in the Tilganga icon is the flaming shield of Viṣṇu, the flames being very clearly articulated. Although the surface of the Lajimpat stele is much abraded, it is doubtful if any such flame was delineated, while the sculptor of the Changu relief has merely used the flame motif as a stylized design. The squat figures of Bali and his queen as well as that of Vāmana, considerably more rigid and stiff in the Tilganga example, are rendered slightly more naturalistically in the Lajimpat stele, and are by far the most relaxed and graceful in that at Changu. In fact, stylistically, the Lajimpat and the Changu images share many features and details with the figure of Kālīya in the Kālīyadamana sculpture, which probably belongs to the seventh century (Fig. 90). On the other hand, the similar arrangement of the group of figures around Viṣṇu's right foot, the manner of rendering the right foot itself, the depiction of Śrī, who appears to be falling off the swaying lotus, the inclusion of only the horse's head, the like representation of the acrobatic Namuci and the disposition of the other *asuras* are features that are identical in the reliefs from Tilganga and Lajimpat.

It seems clear therefore that the sculptor of the Changu stele (Fig. 3) used the Lajimpat example as his model. The differences between the Tilganga and the Lajimpat reliefs may be the result of two contemporary artists working from the same model. If, on the other hand, they reflect stylistic differences of two different periods, then the original image, consecrated by Mānadeva, must be that at Tilganga.

II

Assuming that these two sculptures did not bear any inscription, it would be of interest to compare them with related material in India. The earliest known datable representation of the Vāmana avatāra theme is that in Cave 3 at Badami, executed in A.D. 578 (Fig. 5). A second relief, portraying the same subject, may be seen in Cave 2 at the same site (Fig. 6). Cave 2 is generally attributed to the end of the sixth century but this is still an open issue.[1] In my opinion it is likely to have been ex-

[1] A. Lippe, "Additions and Replacements in Early Chalukyan Temples" in *Archives of Asian Art*, XXIII, (1969-70), pp. 6ff., where the author has argued that Cave 2 is later than Cave 3

cavated earlier, perhaps around A.D. 550. Cave 3 is by far the most elaborate and in many respects anticipates the more ambitious and sumptuous designs of some of the Ellora caves that may be dated around A.D. 600. In contrast, Cave 2 is less ambitious, the pillars are less ornately embellished, and the quality of the carving as well as the modelling of the figures is less assured than those of Cave 3. This becomes quite apparent if we compare the two Vāmana avatāra reliefs.

If Cave 2 were executed after Cave 3, it is difficult to imagine that a sculptor with the Cave 3 Trivikrama as his model would have grouped together the *asuras* in such a clumsy and crowded manner or would have applied such canons of proportions that made his figures, especially of the royal couple and the preceptor, so stocky and plump, when those in the model are so slender and elegant. A similar difference is also apparent in the depiction of Garuḍa and the gods in the upper portion of the panels. They are rather stiff and formal in the Cave 2 relief, whereas in the other they soar through the air gracefully as they approach the scene militantly. The fewer figures in the Cave 3 panel not only give the composition greater clarity, but they are also rendered with more animation. While the *asura* clutching Viṣṇu's leg in the Cave 2 relief is portrayed as a squat and obese figure, reminiscent of Kuṣāṇa yakṣas, in the other a more elegant *asura* hurls himself dramatically at the god's leg in a futile attempt to dissuade him. The ornamentation of Viṣṇu in Cave 3 is far richer and more sumptuous, especially in the design of the crown and the elaborate fan-like spread of the *śaṅkhapatra* behind the ears, while in Cave 2 he is less ostentatiously adorned. It thus seems difficult to accept that the Cave 2 panel was carved after the Cave 3 example.

What seems pertinent for us is that the two Badami panels are related to each other in the same stylistic relationship as the two inscribed Nepali reliefs. The Lajimpat stele (Fig. 2) has slightly more graceful and relaxed figures, which are also better disposed, and displays a greater clarity and assurance in the composition than the Tilganga example (Fig. 1). It may further be admitted that whatever the chronological relationship between the two Badami panels, stylistically they could hardly have been carved earlier than the Nepali reliefs. Rather, the elegance and the suave modelling, as well as the more organized spatial relationship, of the figures in the

and was excavated around 600 A.D. It may be pointed out that this theory is not accepted by all scholars. Even assuming, however, that Lippe is correct in his surmise, it does not disturb our contention that the Trivikrama panel in Cave 3 must have been modelled on that in Cave 2, for Lippe has adumbrated that the former was added around A.D. 650. Thus, either the Cave 3 panel was sculpted in A.D. 578 and that in Cave 2 in 550; or, following Lippe, the dates would be 650 and 600 respectively.

Cave 3 panel have closer affinities with the Changu version (Fig. 3). Although the Nepali sculptors have expressed Viṣṇu's cosmic grandeur with a greater sense of urgency and dramatic power, there seems no doubt that both they and the Badami sculptors have derived their scheme of composition and iconography from the same prototype.

In contrast to those in the Nepali images, the figures in the Badami panels are better proportioned and their modelling reflects a full understanding and appreciation of the plastic qualities of the sixth-century Gupta style. In this respect, the Lajimpat stele (Fig. 2) would seem to be stylistically closer to the Badami panels than the Tilganga example. For the Lajimpat sculpture a better comparison is offered by the Besnagar Gaṅgā where we see the same sense of relaxed though slightly awkward movement and a similarly smooth and animated modelling.[1] Coomaraswamy had suggested a date around A.D. 500 for the Besnagar Gaṅgā, which seems to be correct if we keep in mind the development of the river goddesses between Udaygiri of A.D. 400 and those adorning the sixth century Śiva temple at Bhumara. In the Lajimpat stele and the Besnagar Gaṅgā especially analogous are the figures of the females and the Dwarf in the former and the river goddess and the imp (*gaṇa*) in the latter.

For the Tilganga image more pertinent parallels may be cited in the Kṛṣṇa Govardhana sculpture from Mandor,[2] attributed to the fourth or the fifth century, and the Kosam Śiva-Pārvatī relief of A.D. 459 (Fig. 7). The rather thickset and heavy proportions of the figures in all three sculptures are obviously similar features. Indeed, in contrast to the two Indian images, the Tilganga specimen seems almost more sophisticated, but in all three examples, while there is an awareness of the Gupta idiom, the interpretation is somewhat hesitant. Although both the Tilganga and the Mandor sculptures are informed with a similar spirit of spontaneous movement and vigour, an awkward spatial organization, not usually found in Indian reliefs of the sixth century, characterizes the composition of both.

It seems indubitable, therefore, that the Tilganga relief (Fig. 1) is a work of the second half of the fifth century and is probably the original image installed by Mānadeva. The Lajimpat stele (Fig. 2) could also be a contemporaneous work by a different artist, as is apparently accepted by Kramrisch.[3] The text of the inscriptions, however, does not imply in any way that Mānadeva had consecrated two icons or built two

[1] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, New York, 1965, Pl. XLVI, 177.
[2] *Ibid.*, XLIV, 166.
[3] S. Kramrisch, *The Art of Nepal*, New York, 1964, pp. 17, 19, where she seems to accept both works as contemporary.

temples. It is of course possible that two sculptors had received the royal commission in a contest and finally only one was chosen, but such a practice was uncommon. There are instances in India of a donor commissioning two images, but these were for two different monasteries in widely separated areas.[1] Considering the size of the valley, it seems unlikely that Mānadeva would have dedicated two shrines to the same god in such close proximity. Here again one may argue that there were two important towns in the valley for which two different temples were established.

On the other hand, if the stylistic differences between the two images are not considered to be those of two different but contemporary artists and are taken to indicate a chronological progression, then the only explanation for the identical inscriptions would be that sometime after its consecration the original was damaged or defiled and was replaced by a copy which is the Lajimpat example. As it was a royal consecration, possibly the inscription was transferred verbatim. However, this must have happened before there was any substantial change in the paleography, possibly before the mid-sixth century. As we have seen, in comparison to related material in India, a date around 500-525 seems more realistic for the Lajimpat stele. There are other instances in Nepal where a lost or damaged original was replaced by a copy, the most well-known examples being the liṅga of Paśupatinātha and the Deo Patan Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 52). The latter is a seventeenth century replacement of a sixth century original and hence the stylistic differences are more evident. But the faces of the Paśupatinātha liṅga preserve the earlier characteristics with astonishing faithfulness, no doubt because of the greater sanctity of the original. Perhaps, this is why the Lajimpat stele is a closer copy of the Tilganga image than the later examples.

III

The next firmly datable sculpture in Nepal is an image of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi or Avalokiteśvara standing in a bathing fountain near the jail in Kathmandu (Fig. 8). The inscription on its original base, although not revealing a date, states that the icon of Avalokiteśvara was consecrated by the pious Maṇigupta and his wife, Mahendramatī, during the reign of Rāmadeva[2]. Rāmadeva probably succeeded Vasantadeva and ruled between A.D. 532 and 560. He was certainly ruling in A.D. 547 and so a mid-sixth century date for this sculpture seems assured.

The Bodhisattva stands with a slight *déhanchement* on a plain base, his right hand

[1] Such as donations of the friar Bala during the Kuṣāṇa period.

[2] Gnoli, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

displaying the gesture of munificence (*varadamudrā*) and the left holding the sinuous stem of a fully-blown lotus. That he is clothed is indicated by a hardly perceptible girdle, but otherwise the body beneath the clinging garments appears nude in the Sarnath fashion (Fig. 22). His ornaments consist of a substantial necklace and earrings which are heavily abraded. The hair is arranged in an elaborate chignon with the effigy of his parental Tathāgata, Amitābha, inset in the beautiful curls. A lightly essayed fillet with its ends fluttering above the ears is tied across the forehead. On the pedestal is a kneeling devotee with an offering of flowers, and the aureole is plain except for a rope-like pattern along the edge. A few floral designs are delicately etched around the head of the Bodhisattva, indicating thereby the concept of a shower of flowers (*puṣpavṛṣṭi*).

The figure is considerably deeply cut and the full-blown lotus is given its own volume. The rhythm of the swaying stalk is echoed by the fluent contour of the Bodhisattva's right flank. The soft and smooth modelling of the torso defined by a sinuous outline, the transparency of the garments revealing the boneless body underneath as well as the expression of introspective thought on the face are characteristics that were already formulated by the fifth century in India, especially at Sarnath. However, the Nepali artist seems to have modelled his figure on an icon of the Buddha rather than of the Bodhisattva, for the typical sash of the Sarnath Bodhisattvas (Fig. 22) is conspicuoulsy absent here. The lotus is very handsomely and wholesomely delineated in the finest Sarnath manner, while the equally rich and crisp carving of the hair design and the vegetal motif near the leg recall the sharp and precise cutting of the floral patterns in Gupta reliefs from Sarnath (Fig. 157).

At the same time there are striking differences between this sculpture and those of Sarnath of the fifth-sixth century. The proportions of the figures are quite different as is also the conception of the formal properties of the body, which in the Nepali version is comparatively more bulky and voluminous with heavy shoulders, a broad chest and without the attenuated waist of the Sarnath figures. A slight heaviness is also perceptible in the posture, while the left leg seems to be somewhat awkwardly delineated. The manner of treatment of the volume, also apparent in the fifth century Viṣṇu vikrānta relief (Fig. 1) or the later Changu Garuḍa (Fig. 98), was probably inspired by the Mathura tradition. Far more distinctive, however, are the shape and features of the face: full and fleshy and quite unlike the more oval faces seen either at Sarnath or Mathura. It thus seems clear that the Nepali artists, although aware of contemporary art movements in the Gangetic plains, were already busy developing an idiom of their own.

The next dated landmark is the recently discovered image of Umā-Maheśvara at Sikubahi[1] in Patan bearing an inscription of the year 495 corresponding to A.D. 573 (Fig. 9). There can be no doubt of the contemporaneity of the inscription and the image, but the text of the inscription is somewhat intriguing. In effect it states that a certain Babhruvarma one day noticed that a set of clay images of the Mother Goddesses (Mātṛkās), erected once upon a time by his predecessors, had fallen into disrepair and he wished to renovate them. Before he could do so, however, he passed away, and his brother's wife, Deśa Bhaṭṭārikā, in deference to his wish, commissioned a new set of images of the Mātṛkās in stone.

Since both figures in the relief are badly abraded (and partly repaired in cement plaster), it is rather difficult to identify them. However, the erect phallus of the male figure is beyond a doubt so that the couple may be recognized as Maheśvara and Umā. This may also be inferred from the later images of the pair (Figs. 130, 131) and from the fact that no other icon in Nepal is known to portray a divine couple in a similar fashion. The question may be raised here as to why these two deities are represented when the inscription categorically states that Deśa Bhaṭṭārikā had consecrated images of the Mother Goddesses. This may perhaps be explained by recalling that in the Brāhmaṇical iconographic tradition in India it was a common practice to portray Śiva as Vīrabhadra preceding the Mātṛkās. Possibly the particular tradition followed by the artist in this instance required the presence also of Umā, or she may here be included as Māheśvarī, the first of the Mother Goddesses.[2]

Because of their condition it is also equally difficult to determine the stylistic features of the two figures. In general it may be stated that they firmly establish the fact that by the mid-sixth century the Nepali sculptors, although well-aware of the Gupta tradition, were yet to assimilate the idiom with complete confidence. Notwithstanding that Umā's graceful posture and the spontaneous turn of her head are delineated with assured naturalism, Śiva's legs are rather awkwardly placed. Indeed, in this respect the relief is comparable to the Lajimpat Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 2), or to the couple carved on a medallion in Cave 3 at Badami, dated A.D. 578 (Fig. 10). In a broad sense, therefore, the styles in India and Nepal seemingly follow roughly

[1] N. R. Banerjee and B. K. Rijal, "Three Early Sculptures in stone from the National Museum, Kathmandu", *Ancient Nepal*, 4 (July 1968), pp. 39ff and Pl. VII. For a reading of the inscription and a Nepali translation, see *Pūrṇimā* (Kathmandu), 17, pp. 76ff.

[2] The practice of placing Umā-Maheśvara before a row of the Mothers seems to have been known in Bihar. A complete set of such images from Seraikilla is now preserved in the Patna Museum.

parallel paths of development, but, as it is to be expected, Nepal appears to pick up the movements rather belatedly.

Although the inscribed Chapagaon Brahmā (Fig. 11) is not a dated example, both on the grounds of paleography and style, it can be attributed firmly to the late fifth or the early sixth century. The paleography of the letters conforms closely to that on inscriptions of the two Viṣṇu vikrānta images. The inscription merely records the names of the donors, Kuberagupta and Anīkagupta, who were probably brothers.

A deeply cut relief, the impressive figure of Brahmā sits rather uncomfortably on a lotus whose stem rises from a plain rectangular base. Behind him only one side of his elaborate throne embellished with a *makara* design is now visible. He wears a plain dhoti indicated by parallel striations in broad bands and held together by a lightly essayed string. His torso is bare except for the sacred thread of the brahmin and the deer-skin, signifying his ascetic character, flung across his left shoulder. Simple bangles adorn his hands which carry the waterpot and the rosary, while the ears of the front head have ornaments of rather a peculiar kind. The central head sports a tiara, which has the grinning lion's head (*kīrttimukha*) as the principal motif of ornamentation, while the two side heads have the hair arranged in chignons, typical of a yogī. At the two lower corners are devotees, no doubt representing the Gupta donors, one with his arms clasped in the gesture of adoration and the other holding a garland.

Although Brahmā appears to be falling off the lotus, his impressive proportions and solid volumes impart to the figure a sense of confidence sufficient to offset his somewhat precarious posture. Massive physical strength is indicated by the solidly conceived torso with the swelling planes of the chest, the wide shoulders, thick, rotund arms and calves. This volumetric emphasis in the modelling is also characteristic of the Gana bahal Padmapāṇi of the mid-sixth century (Fig. 8). The treatment of the lotus is similar to that seen in the Lajimpat relief below Śrī-Lakṣmī (Fig. 2); while the rather heavy proportions, the manner of delineating the unwieldy right foot with the spread-out toes as well as the right hand, are features it has in common with the Tilganga Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 1).

If we now compare the sculpture with contemporary Indian works, we are at once struck by the remarkable similarity between the two attendant figures of Brahmā and donor figures seen generally in Gupta sculpture of the fifth-sixth centuries (Fig. 112). Moreover, the tiara of Brahmā with its *kīrttimukha* is a direct borrowing from Mathura, where the motif was popular during the Kuṣāṇa and Gupta periods. Thus, both on internal and external evidence, an early sixth century date for the Chapagaon Brahmā seems irrefutible.

IV

At least two monuments may on circumstantial evidence be assigned to the seventh century with some degree of certainty. One of these is the mammoth supine Viṣṇu at Budhanilkanth (Fig. 12). An inscription issued in the year A.D. 642, when king Bhīmārjunadeva was the nominal monarch and Viṣṇugupta the *de facto* ruler, alludes to the accomplishment by the inhabitants of Dakṣiṇakoligrāma of the tremendous feat of dragging a huge block of stone for the purpose of carving an image of Jalaśayana Viṣṇu.[1] The same achievement seems also to have been recorded in the Gopālarāja *Vaṁśāvalī*, although there Viṣṇugupta is considered to be the reigning monarch and donor.[2] Notwithstanding the allusion to an earlier shrine of Jalaśayana in one of Aṁśuvarman's inscriptions, the detailed description in Bhīmārjunadeva's edict seems indubitably to refer to the present image at Budhanilkanth.

Art historically, one of the most significant sculptural works in Nepal is a little caitya (of a type known in the valley as Licchavi caitya) standing in the Dhvaka baha at Kathmandu (Fig. 13). Rather than appearing as a stūpa, it looks more like a miniature, monolithic temple, crowned by a hemispherical dome. Each face of the stūpa admits two horizontal sections of unequal proportions. The taller and lower section contains a standing figure, while a Tathāgata is seated within each of the four ornately framed niches in the upper portion. The four standing figures represent the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi or Avalokiteśvara with a kneeling female, the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi with his personified attribute (Fig. 14), and two Tathāgatas (Figs. 15, 16), one of whom may portray the future Buddha, Maitreya, and the other Śākyamuni. All the four seated figures of the Tathāgata in the niches (Fig. 13) are alike and display the gesture of meditation (*samādhimudrā*).

The identification of Padmapāṇi is in no doubt as the Bodhisattva holds the lotus with his left hand. The second Bodhisattva probably represents Vajrapāṇi, for the object he grasps seems to be the upper portion of a thunderbolt (*vajra*), emerging from the dwarf's head (Fig. 14). Thus, the dwarf, with his arms disposed in the attitude of submission (*vinayahasta*), is the personification of the attribute. The identification gains confirmation from several other figures of this type, especially a similar image representing Indra (Fig. 247), where the form of the thunderbolt is clearly

[1] See Pal, *op. cit.*, p. 78. I have suggested there that king Bhīmārjunadeva himself may have been the donor of this image. But it now appears, as Mary Slusser and G. Vajracharyya have indicated in a paper to be published shortly in *Artibus Asiae*, that the work was commissioned by Viṣṇugupta himself.

[2] D. R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, III, Calcutta, 1966, p. 117.

discernible. Whether the two Tathāgatas, each differently attired, portray the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni and the future Buddha, Maitreya, is difficult to determine. On the other hand, the presence of two images of Śākyamuni makes little symbolical sense. In other such monuments either all four represent the Buddha (Figs. 170, 172) or they portray Śākyamuni, Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi and Maitreya who is shown as a Bodhisattva (Fig. 171). However, it was also the common practice from an early period to depict Maitreya in the garb of the Buddha, so that it is not inconceivable that the second Tathāgata in the Dhvaka baha shrine represents Maitreya. The four Tathāgatas in the niches most likely portray the four Buddhas of direction rather than the five Tathāgatas of the Vajrayāna pantheon, although it must be remembered that Hsüan-tsang, the seventh century Chinese pilgrim, claimed that the five Jinas were widely venerated in Nepal.

Neither stylistically nor iconologically can such a shrine be directly related to any particular school or monument in India, although the concept of a Buddhist *caumukha* appears to have had some currency in Bihar. The idea probably stems from the Jaina *caumukhas* that were so popular in Mathura. Generally, Sarnath was the probable source of inspiration for the figural types, but influences of other centres are also perceptible. In depicting one of the two Tathāgatas (Fig. 16) the artist has clearly followed the Mathura convention in delineating the garment (Fig. 17). Basically, however, it is the same type of figure as the other image (Fig. 15)—complete with the belt around the waist—with formal striations added to emphasize the volume of the garment. It must be pointed out that this belt or waist-band is not a characteristic of either Sarnath or Mathura Buddha images but usually forms a part of the Bodhisattva's apparel.

In her book on Nepal Stella Kramrisch has suggested a seventh century date for the monument.[1] Along the base of the stūpa the Buddhist creed is inscribed in Gupta characters prevalent during the Licchavi period. The paleography is particularly comparable to that seen in inscriptions of the later Licchavi period, and this would seem to confirm Kramrisch's date. However, because of the conservative nature of paleography in Nepal, where the Gupta characters seem to have continued well into the ninth century, I will try to establish the date of the monument by comparing it with related material in India.

If we compare the images of standing Buddhas with the stele from Bihar showing the Buddha taming the mad elephant Nalagiri (Fig. 18), it must be admitted that the Dhvaka baha Buddhas are not only better examples as works of art but are very

[1] Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

likely earlier. The Bihar stele was consecrated in the year four of Mahendrapāla which would correspond to ca. A.D. 890. The Nepal Buddhas are much closer to the Sarnath models both in terms of form and linear grace. Generally, in Gupta Buddhas, from Sarnath (Fig. 19) as well as Mathura, the left arm of the Buddha is bent at the elbow slightly below the waistline almost at an uncomfortable angle. In the Dhvaka baha Buddha images, however, the left hand is raised to the shoulder level as it gathers up the ends of the robe with an elegant sweep. The manner of holding the robe shoulder high almost certainly originated in the Amaravati region in India and was used ubiquitously by the sculptors of Ajanta during the Gupta period. At Sarnath only in reliefs portraying incidents from the life of the Buddha (Fig. 20) do we see such a disposition of the left hand. In independent images of the Buddha the left hand is always held below the waistline. In one sixth century image from Mathura (Fig. 17), however, the left hand is not only raised shoulder high but it gathers up the garment with a remarkable sweep as in Nepal. In eastern India, particularly in Bihar, as is evident from Rajgir and Nalanda, it became customary by the seventh century to represent the left hand raised to the shoulder. At any rate, stylistically, the Dhvaka baha Buddhas seem closer to the standing Buddhas of sixth century Sarnath and Mathura than the ninth century Buddhas from Bihar (Fig. 18).

In both the Dhvaka baha figures the robe appears as an organic part of the clothing and is treated with greater naturalism, although the trough-like schematic design is retained. The sense of naturalism is especially evident in the manner in which the artist has emphatically swung the garment into the left hand of the Buddha, thereby indicating its mass as well as expressing the spontaneity of the movement. It is manifestly clear that whatever awkwardness is perceptible in the *déhanchement* of the Gana bahal Bodhisattva (Fig. 8) is now completely resolved. The sense of movement is now implicit rather than contrived, the proportions show mathematical exactitude, and the concise but mellifluous contour defines the swelling but abstract form with restrained assurance.

If we now take the figure of the seated Buddha within the niche and compare it with similar figures from sixth century Sarnath (Fig. 20) and an inscribed sculpture from eighth century Bihar (Fig. 21), it becomes apparent at once that stylistically the Dhvaka baha Buddha is closer to the Sarnath figures. At any rate, it is unlikely to be later than the inscribed Buddha from Bihar, for which the eighth century seems a *terminus ante quem* on paleographic grounds. In terms of modelling it retains the memory of Sarnath and only anticpates the restrained naturalism of the eighth century Buddha (Fig. 21)—a naturalism that subsequently became characteristic of Pāla Buddhas in general.

In a similar fashion, the Bodhisattva figures of the Dhvaka baha monument (Figs. 13, 14) continue the basic schema that had become stereotyped in India by the Gupta period (Fig. 22). Related formally to the mid-sixth century Avalokiteśvara near Gana bahal (Fig. 8), they manifest the same penchant for bulky volume although informed with greater linear fluency. The astonishing persistence of the conceptual schema as well as the universal character of the Gupta tradition may be graphically demonstrated by comparing sculptures from as far apart as Sarnath (Fig. 22) and Aurangabad (Fig. 23). Yet, it is also abundantly clear that in matters of stylistic details these images are as different from the Nepali sculptures as they are from one another. In some of the Indian specimens the sash is altogether eliminated and where it does occur its treatment is substantially different from that of the Nepali figures. In almost all the Indian examples the dhoti is plain, and only in the Sanchi Bodhisattva do we find a design similar to that in the Nepali works. Another distinctive variation is that while usually the Indian artists delineated the hair of the Bodhisattvas in an elegant chignon (*jaṭāmukuṭa*), the Nepalis gave them coronets or crowns. The crown of Avalokiteśvara is a variant of the Mathura headdresses in that the single crest is elaborated into three, but that of Vajrapāṇi recalls the type seen at Ajanta, a point that will receive added emphasis in a subsequent chapter. Yet another interesting difference is perceptible in the almost ubiquitous use of the serpent motif as an armlet in the Nepali Bodhisattvas. Although it occurs occasionally at Sarnath, the motif is not generally favoured by the Indian artists as an ornament for a Bodhisattva.

The above comparison not only establishes the existence of a Nepali type of Bodhisattva image, but also demonstrates how the Nepalis created their own characteristic style, based ultimately on Sarnath models, but with elements borrowed from other centres as well. I will now attempt to fix the time of the creation of the Dhvaka baha caitya, for it remains a work of crucial importance for the history of Nepali art.

The arched shape of the niches within which these figures stand have close parallels at Nalanda. Each border is decorated with a different motif, one of which, the rosette, occurs in a similar fashion at Nalanda in the niches along the base of a monument that was probably erected in the second half of the seventh century (Fig. 25). The rosette was in fact a popular decorative motif of the period and is also seen in the great temple at Paharpur, which may with reasonable certainty be dated to the eighth century. Earlier it was employed as an ornamental design on the haloes of the Gupta Buddha images of Sarnath. Thus, the motif probably diffused from Sarnath with the same rapidity and flair for organized dispersion of artistic ideas that charac-

terized the movement of styles in the Buddhist world in general. Among other decorative elements are floral medallions, simulated wooden brackets, *āmalaka, makara* and *kīrttimukha*. All these features are derived from the repertory of the Gupta artists and are rendered with chaste elegance and simplicity. The lions at the corners are strikingly similar in both form and hieratic majesty to the lions of the Gupta period.

Finally, the iconographic scheme of the monument seems only to anticipate the later concept of the Five Tathāgatas, for the same gesture is attributed to all the four seated figures without any attempt to distinguish them. Although the concept of the Five Tathāgatas appears to have been known to Hsüan-tsang, there is no artistic or literary evidence earlier than the eighth century in India that may indicate its currency or popularity as reflected in images and texts of the tenth-eleventh century. All the above arguments, therefore, seem to confirm a seventh century date for the Dhvaka baha caitya, perhaps towards the end of that century, rather than the beginning. While it is manifestly clear that the Nepali sculptors were aware of both Mathura and Sarnath, the monument strongly reveals the original flair as well as the assimilative power of the Licchavi artists. Although they had to work within the framework of an authoritarian religious tradition, which upheld that only by perpetuating the type could the magic potency of the sacred image be enhanced, their ingenuity or artistry is beyond doubt.

While a comparison of the Bodhisattva type—as evolved in the Gupta and post-Gupta stages—reveals a universal ideological similarity, the differences between one image and another become manifest not only in the delineation of the surface details but also in the basic concept of the form, often determined by the divergent canons of proportions employed in the different areas. At the same time it is also apparent that the same conceptual schema was employed by the artists to portray various divinities irrespective of their sectarian affiliation. Theological differences did little to influence the style, although, as we shall presently see, the theme represented often determined the formal aspects of a work of art.

V

Between the Dhvaka baha caitya of the seventh century and A.D. 1000, there are remarkably few firmly datable sculptures. It is also rather curious that there is a similar scarcity of inscriptions during this phase of Nepali history. The Licchavi rule must have ended sometime around the year 800. The next landmark in Nepali history is the establishment of a new era, known as the Newari era, in A.D. 879/880. Inscrip-

tions reappear again in profusion from the eleventh century, although names of monarchs can be gathered from palm leaf manuscripts of the tenth.

Purely on paleographic grounds, a small bronze image of the Buddha now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art can be attributed to the ninth (Fig. 26). Along the base of the gilt bronze is inscribed the Buddhist creed in a single row. The script seems certainly earlier than the more cursive script found in the eleventh century inscriptions. When compared to the inscribed images from Bihar, the script compares closely with that on the ninth century Nalagiridamana sculpture (Fig. 18) and appears to be slightly more developed than that seen in the eighth century images (Fig. 21). Thus, on the grounds of paleography, a ninth century date for the Los Angeles Buddha seems incontestable.

The sculpture shows the Buddha seated in the classic posture of a yogī with his hands resting on his lap (*samādhimudrā*). His body is fully draped in the fashion of the Gupta Buddhas of Sarnath, covering both shoulders completely, unlike the slightly earlier Bihar image (Fig. 21). The head is ringed by a flaming halo which thus seems to have become an established stylistic cliché by the ninth century. The curls of the hair are fully delineated in the front, although at the back of the head they are indicated by rough linear hatching. The form is closely derived from the seated Buddhas on the Dhvaka baha caitya (Fig. 13) reflecting the same precision of proportions and a similar sense of equipoise. The treatment of the plastic mass shows an equally smooth and almost abstract quality, and the face, while manifesting the introspective calmness of a Sarnath Buddha, is distinguished by slightly more rounded features and even a softer expression.

The tenth century is represented by only one dated sculpture, the Umā-Maheśvara image at Kwa bahal tole (Fig. 27). Once again there is a controversy among scholars regarding the date given in the dedicatory inscription which occurs on a separate pedestal. The contemporaneity of the pedestal and the image, however, can be established from the fact that the paleography of the dedicatory inscription seems to be the same as that of a single line of invocation inscribed along the base of the image itself. Thus, with reasonable certainty the image may be considered to be the original dedication. The problem, however, lies with the dedicatory inscription itself, which begins as follows:

rājye śrī guṇakāmadeva nṛpates-saptottarexśate . . . .

The name of the ruling monarch Guṇakāmadeva is thus in no doubt. But Nepali history knows of two Guṇakāmadevas, one of whom ruled towards the end of the

tenth century, while the other reigned from ca. 1184 until 1196. The crucial letter, therefore, is the one that is indicated by an x in that part of the inscription quoted above. Regmi[1] reads this as *tri* which would make the date as 307 corresponding to A.D. 1187. However, on a very careful examination of the inscription, the reading of the letter as *tri* seems impossible; rather, the letter appears to be *bde* which would give a reading of *saptottarebde*. The date thus seems to be 107 corresponding to A.D. 987.

In contrast to the three previous centuries, the eleventh offers us several sculptures that are firmly datable. Two are of the sun-god Sūrya and both are at Patan. While that from Thapahiti (Fig. 28) was consecrated in the year 1065 A.D., the Saugal example (Fig. 29) was dedicated in the year 1083. In addition, we now have a repoussé gilt-bronze plaque of Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu (Fig. 30) that bears an inscription dated in the year 1004 A.D. when king Udayadeva was reigning. A second bronze, also representing Viṣṇu, was possibly consecrated in the year 1052 (Fig. 31); its present location, however, is not known. An inscribed sculpture of Mañjunātha in Kathmandu (Fig. 33), although not provided with a date, may be assigned to the first part of the eleventh century on paleographical grounds.[2] Finally, a bronze Śiva-liṅga bears an inscription recording its dedication in the year 1060 when Bhāskaradeva was the reigning monarch (Fig. 32). Thus, in contrast to the paucity of the three previous centuries, the eleventh offers us a plethora of dated works.

From the following century we have only one firmly datable sculpture, the Naksal Sūrya of A.D. 1159 (Fig. 34). It must be pointed out, however, that scholars are not unanimous regarding the reading of the inscription. According to Regmi, the Naksal Sūrya was consecrated in the year 179 N.S. corresponding to 1059 A.D.[3] But Gautamavajra Vajracarya's reading gives us a date of 279 corresponding to 1159 A.D. and this seems to be the correct version.[4]

The Malla period of Nepali history, particularly of the three kingdoms after Yakṣmalla (d. 1485), is especially rich in dated material. The period appears to have been quite prolific in its output of images both in metal and stone. I have illustrated a number that can be attributed firmly because of inscriptions (Figs. 35-49). However, as will be apparent from the following discussion, simply because an object bears an inscription with a date does not necessarily solve our problem. We will now study some sculptures which, despite their dated inscriptions, remain stylistic enigmas.

[1] Regmi, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
[2] This sculpture was first brought to my attention by Mary Slusser.
[3] Regmi, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[4] G. Vajracharyya, "Prācin murtikalāko viṣaymā", *Purṇimā*, I, 3, pp. 26-27.

VI

In a small dilapidated shrine at Yengu bahal in Patan stands an impressive image of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi (Fig. 50). The separate pedestal below the image bears an inscription[1] giving the name of a king Mānadeva and the year 180. If this is referred to the Newari era, we get a date of A.D. 1060. However, there are a number of difficulties in accepting such a date. First of all, we know from other sources that king Baladeva was ruling at the same time in Nepal, although a conjunct rule of two monarchs is not unlikely. Secondly, and more significantly, the script of the inscription is very similar to that of Licchavi epigraphs and quite unlike that of eleventh century inscriptions such as the Patan Sūrya images. If the date is referred to the earlier era then we have a date of A.D. 758, a period about which nothing is known. This would mean that a Mānadeva, presumably a Licchavi, ascended the throne shortly after Jayadeva II, which is the view held by the Nepali historian Regmi.

The sculpture itself, however, tells a different story. If it is regarded as the original image dedicated in the year A.D. 758, then it must be a work done at about the same time as the Dhvaka baha Licchavi caitya (Fig. 13). Stylistically this seems difficult to accept in view of the greater elongation and linearization of the form, the greater ornateness of the jewelry as well as the aureole with its prominent flame-shaped design along the edge. Moreover, the shape of the face, as also the physiognomical features, is closer to those of the eleventh century Sūryas from Patan (Figs. 28, 29) rather than to those of the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattvas. Indeed, the sculpture appears to have more in common with the two Sūrya images than it does with the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattvas. All three share the same penchant for slimness and linearization, the same degree of ornateness and similar designs of ornaments. Particularly noteworthy are the designs of the crown, the necklace, and the belt, the treatment of the pleats of the dhoti between the legs, and the design of the halo immediately behind the head of Padmapāṇi. This is treated in an identical fashion in the repoussé plaque of Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu of A.D. 1004 (Fig. 30). Moreover, the exuberance of the floral scroll along the inner band and the broad shapes of the flame motif along the edge of the larger aureole is closer to that of the Naksal Sūrya (Fig. 34) than to that of a Licchavi sculpture. It thus seems impossible to sustain an eighth century date for this sculpture and a more realistic date would be the eleventh century. If, however, the inscription on the separate socle is of the mid-eighth century, then the image must be considered a later replacement. On the other hand, in Nepal an archaistic

[1] Regmi, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

and freak survival of a style of writing centuries later would not be unthinkable.

A second sculpture for which the inscriptional evidence must be accepted with caution is the Umā-Maheśvara relief at Ganchanani in Patan (Fig. 51). As in the Kwa bahal Umā-Maheśvara or the Yengu bahal Avalokiteśvara, the inscription occurs on a separate pedestal, although it does record the consecration of an Umā-Maheśvara image in the year 132 corresponding to A.D. 1012. However, while the Kwa bahal tole Umā-Maheśvara affords additional paleographic evidence and appears to belong to the pedestal on which it rests, the size of the Ganchanani stele seems rather disproportionate to the pedestal. I shall examine this sculpture in a later chapter along with other Umā-Maheśvara reliefs, but it does show the difficulties in Nepal of accepting paleographic evidence blindly.

Two other sculptures pertinent to our discussion are the Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa now standing at Deo Patan (Fig. 52) and an inscribed Viṣṇu in the Archeological Garden at Patan.[1] I have conclusively demonstrated elsewhere[2] that the Deo Patan Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa image is a replacement of the Licchavi original and may even have been installed as late as the nineteenth century. The Viṣṇu image is dated by an inscription to A.D. 1417, and yet a cursory glance at it reveals the inconsistency between the style and the date. The paleography of the inscription is quite modern and certainly not earlier than A.D. 1600. Stylistically, especially in the porportions of the figures as well as in their modelling, the sculpture has more in common with the Deo Patan Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa (Fig. 52) or the 1698 Viṣṇu (Fig. 48) than with the Pharphing Jhaṅkeśvarī (Fig. 36), the Harigaon Umā-Maheśvara of 1414 (Fig. 38) or the Boston Indra (Fig. 42). If we compare it with late seventeenth century sculptures (Figs. 45, 46), it would be impossible to accept the epigraphical evidence. In my opinion we are here confronted with a careless scribe who has inscribed the numeral for 5 when it should have been 8. Thus emended, we would have a date of 1717 which is stylistically and paleographically more acceptable.

A somewhat different problem is raised by the beautiful covers of a *Devīmāhātmya* manuscript of A.D. 1583 now in the University Library at Cambridge (Fig. 41). The exquisite workmanship of the covers as well as the full and sensuous modelling of the figures, however, seems to indicate a much earlier date for the covers. And yet it appears to have been made specifically for the manuscript, and, certainly, the two illustrations in the manuscript itself are stylistically very similar to the figures on the covers. At the same time, if quality was an index one would tend to date the

[1] E. and R. L. Waldschmidt, *Nepal*, New York, 1970, Fig. 16.
[2] Pal, *op. cit.*, pp. 128ff.

covers earlier than the Cron Vasudhārā of 1467 (Fig. 39). Thus, if we accept the Cambridge covers as contemporaneous with the manuscript—as we must—they not only reveal how the Newars continued to create works of artistic excellence well into the sixteenth century, but also re-emphasize how one must accept even dated sculptures in Nepal with caution.

VII

It remains now to summarize the above discussion of dated or datable sculptures and to arrive at some sort of generalization that may serve as a useful frame of reference for the subsequent review of Nepali sculpture. It is apparent that less than a dozen sculptures with some degree of assurance can be attributed to the Licchavi period (ca. 300-800). The earliest of these are the two inscribed images of Viṣṇu vikrānta (Figs. 1,2); the latest, perhaps the Licchavi caitya at Dhvaka baha (Fig. 13), erected sometime towards the end of the seventh century.

Generally, all these sculptures seem to reflect more than a cursory acquaintance, on the part of the sculptors, with contemporary styles that developed along the Gangetic valley, roughly between Mathura in the west and Pāṭaliputra (modern Patna) on the east. While we still do not have earlier prototypes in India for the two Viṣṇu vikrānta reliefs, a comparison with the sixth century Badami panels has revealed that both the Nepali and the Badami versions must have evolved from a common source. Logically that source would be Mathura, the bastion of Viṣṇuism during the Kuṣāṇa period (first three centuries of the Christian era). Stylistically both sculptures reflect rather a hesitant interpretation of the Gupta style that had already been formulated in the twin centres of Mathura and Sarnath by the mid-fifth century. On the other hand, while the Lajimpat Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 2), in the modelling of the figures, manifests an awareness of the greater linearism of the Sarnath or Deogarh schools, the Tilganga Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 1) seems to continue the portliness and the sense of volume that remained the hallmark of Mathura sculpture well into the sixth century. It must be pointed out, however, that the Nepali sculptors did not favour the naturalistic modelling apparent in Mathura sculptures of the fifth and sixth centuries.

The penchant for bulky monumentality and an emphasis on solid volumes continues to be the predominant features of both the Chapagaon Brahmā (Fig. 12) and the Gana bahal Padmapāṇi (Fig. 8). As I have already shown there is rather an unusual attempt on the part of the sculptor of the Brahmā image to delineate the

swelling planes of the torso by emphasizing the underlying musculature of the chest. In the Gana bahal Padmapāṇi, however, the tendency to abstraction and the preference for a smooth boneless body are the paramount stylistic features. A similar feeling for basic volumes and broad areas of modelled surfaces characterizes the sleeping Viṣṇu at Budhanilkanth (Fig. 12), which assumes even a more formal and rather ponderous bearing when compared to the standing figures.

Between the Gana bahal Padmapāṇi (Fig. 8) of the mid-sixth century and the figures in the Dhvaka baha caitya (Figs. 13-16), the most striking difference is perhaps in the greater assurance with which the sculptors of the caitya have handled their forms. The figures now appear more free and relaxed; the postures have none of the awkwardness of the Gana bahal figure; the outline is continuous and mellifluous; and the portliness is comparatively reduced with a greater emphasis on fluent and rhythmic linear qualities.

I have already remarked that more than any other monument of the early period, the Dhvaka baha caitya reveals the awareness on the part of its sculptors of both the Sarnath and the Mathura styles. In the rather curious manner of personification of the attributes of Vajrapāṇi, the monument also seems cognizant of the Deccani tradition as seen for example at Aurangabad (Fig. 23) or Kanheri (Fig. 53). On the other hand, both Nepal and the Deccan may have derived such similar features from a common source of the Gupta period. At any rate it is quite apparent that while in the sixth century the Nepali sculptors were still clinging to the memories of the more vital Kusāṇa style, by the seventh they had completely and successfully absorbed and assimilated the more refined qualities of the Gupta manner as epitomized in the schools of Sarnath, Deogarh and other sites of the middle country (Madhyadeśa).

The most significant stylistic change between the sculpture of the Licchavi period and that of the eleventh century is the increasing tendency towards linearization. While this is not always valid, it must be admitted that the figures in the Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu plaque (Fig. 30) or in the two Patan Sūrya images (Figs. 28, 29) are considerably more slim and attenuated when compared to the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattvas. In addition, they also reveal a certain amount of rigidity and lack of inner verve, which may be attributed to the increasing degree of stylization and repetitious use of the same basic formal vocabulary. Finally, there is now a greater sense of ornamentation and interest in the surface design, which seems to reach an almost rococo exuberance, at least, in occasional sculptures.

The Malla period (1200-1759) witnessed a greater degree of national consciousness. Whatever their origins—and like the beginning of other dynasties in Nepal, the

origins of the Mallas are also lost in obscurity—by adopting Newari rather than Sanskrit as the court language, the Mallas were directly instrumental in moulding the distinctive character of the nation as we know it today. Although Sanskrit continued to be used as a language of sophistication and most kings were very likely expected to know it—and some even contributed to its literature—increasingly, and especially after Sthitimalla, Newari became not only the language employed in royal proclamations, courts of law, etc. but it began to develop a literature of its own.

This national consciousness is also reflected in the architecture of the period. It is obvious that whatever they had borrowed in styles of sculpture or painting, the Nepalis remained faithful to their predominantly wooden form of architecture rather than adopt the more ambitious and versatile modes current in northern India. In sculpture as well, though to a lesser degree than in architecture, the works of the Malla period are more recognizably Nepali.

Perhaps, the most significant difference is in the shape of the face and in the physiognomical features. It will be noticed time and again that although a distinct ethnic stamp is perceptible in some of the very early sculptures, and while this intrudes in the odd sculpture or two throughout history, it is much more apparent in the sculptures of the Malla period. Generally, during the Licchavi period the norms of the Gupta tradition exerted a strong influence just as Sanskrit and Indian literary styles remained predominant. During the Ṭhākurī period as well, the basic "Aryan" ideal did not change, although the shapes of the faces show greater variety. Both the fullness of the face as well as the sharpness of the features are now diluted. This is particularly evident in the sculptures of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; the lips are no longer the full, heavy lips of the earlier period, the nose less sharply defined. In the subsequent Malla period, the faces become more frankly Mongoloid; the eyes are not essayed as sweepingly as in sculptures of the earlier periods and often appear as slits; the lips are even less substantial, and the nose rarely sharp and aquiline. The shape of the face more often is round than it is oval, and, generally, the expression attains a softness due to the summary definition of the features.

Increasingly the modelling becomes less substantial and the style shows signs of exhaustion by the fifteenth century. This is not surprising in a tradition that has persisted for such a long time and where the religion has continually superimposed its restrictions. The most readily perceptible difference in the modelling is apparent in the delineation of the female form. The form is most sumptuously abundant in the Licchavi sculptures, it becomes more linear and loses some of its voluptuousness in the Ṭhākurī period (Figs. 27, 30, 51), and, finally, in the later Malla period

even the breasts, which the Sanskrit poets were so fond of describing as "golden jars", are now hardly perceptible (Figs. 38, 39). After the sixteenth century the bodies are often draped fully in the current fashion with blouses and upper garments, thereby reflecting the increasing inhibitions of society.

The stylistic sources in north India, at least as far as sculpture was concerned, had dried up after the twelfth century. Yet, until the sixteenth century the Newari craftsmen continued to create works of quality and originality perhaps motivated by increasing national awareness. Thereafter, however, the tradition was exhausted, and no new impetus, either internal or external, was found to guide it into new directions.

CHAPTER TWO

EARLY SCULPTURES AND STYLISTIC PROBLEMS

Recent archaeological discoveries clearly push back the history of Nepali sculpture much earlier than the fifth century Viṣṇu vikrānta reliefs (Figs. 1, 2), the earliest datable sculptures in the valley. These new discoveries will be reviewed in this chapter and, in addition, I will discuss others that appear as stylistic problems and for which firm dates are difficult to suggest. The problem is particularly aggravating because of the geographical isolation and the diminutive size of the valley as well as the essentially conservative character of the artistic tradition.

I

An impressive sculpture recently discovered from Harigaon is now preserved in the National Museum at Kathmandu (Fig. 54). Although the strictly frontal aspect of the sculpture is evident, the fact that it is fully carved in the round indicates that the image was also intended to be viewed from the back. It is very probable that like the Kuṣāṇa yakṣa and Bodhisattva images this too must once have graced a hypaethral shrine, where the devotee circumambulated the icon in the open.

The close similarity of the Nepali figure and a Bodhisattva image of the Kuṣāṇa period in the Patna Museum (Fig. 55) is obvious. Both reveal similar modelling, proportions and formal traits with emphasis on solid volumes and imperious dignity. In contrast to the front the back is modelled in a relatively summary fashion. In both sculptures the firm and determined posture is emphasized further by the resolute fashion in which the left fist rests against the thigh. Both wear a diaphanous dhoti that does not attempt to conceal the fleshy and rounded shapes of the thighs. The additional sash of the Patna Bodhisattva seems to be missing in the Nepali example, while the two tassels that hang along the right thigh of the Patna figure are transferred to the back in the other. The torsos of both figures were draped lightly by a gossamer shawl (*uttarīya*) whose existence can only be inferred from the back and from the volume given to its gathered portion along the left shoulder and arm. This is a distinct stylistic trait of such sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period in India and was not continued in the Gupta age.

It is, thus, overwhemingly apparent that the Nepali Bodhisattva is not only stylistically related to the Patna figure, but that both must be contemporary works. The Patna Bodhisattva is very likely a product of the second or the early third century and one could unhesitatingly attribute the Nepali figure to the latter date.

A more enigmatic sculpture stands in a corner of the Kumbheśvara temple courtyard at Patan and is locally worshipped as the goddess of small-pox, Śītalā (Fig.56). Unmistakably, however, the figure is a male striking a determined posture with his legs slightly apart. His right hand holds a lotus but the emblem in the left hand, if there was one, is now beyond recognition. What is curious are several other figures carved in the front and along the side of the stele (Fig. 57). Below the right hand is a somewhat obese male receiving something in the palms of his hands. On the other side is a female whose exact function is not clear. Along the side of the relief is another standing female holding some sort of offering in her raised left hand, while the right hangs down in a limp manner displaying the gesture of munificence. Above her is a princely male seated in *lalitāsana* with one leg pendant.

A positive identification of this figure, like a number of others in Nepal, remains elusive. The figure wears a dhoti and a sash that appears to go across the thighs diagonally as in images of Bodhisattvas. The figure may indeed be a Bodhisattva, or Sūrya the sun god, or Viṣṇu, all of whom may carry the lotus as an appropriate emblem. But the presence of subsidiary figures is more difficult to explain, particularly for Sūrya, although a Bodhisattva could have devotees of both sexes bringing him offerings. On the other hand, if the figure represents Viṣṇu, as he well might, the male attendant would then be the personification of the lotus (*padmapuruṣa*) and the female, the personified form of the mace (*gadānārī*). The female along the side, in that case, may be Lakṣmī or Bhūdevī, both Viṣṇu's consorts, and the figure above, an attendant deity (*pratihāra*). It is true that Viṣṇu is rarely given two arms, but in early Nepal there seems to have been a prevailing tradition of attributing only two arms to the principal divinities, such as Brahmā (Fig. 11) and Śiva (Figs. 74), all of whom are supposed to be shown with four arms normally. It may be mentioned, however, that the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* preserves a tradition, probably of the Gupta period, which knows of Viṣṇu images with two arms.[1] It further describes the personified Cakrapuruṣa as a pot-bellied dwarf,[2] as we see in a Varāha from Bihar (Fig. 94), so that Padmapuruṣa, too, may well have been conceived as an obese figure.

It is manifestly clear that the sculptor has lavished more attention upon the prin-

[1] P. Shah (ed.), *Viṣṇudharmottara-Purāṇa, Third Khaṇḍa*, I, Baroda, 1958, ch. 60.
[2] *Ibid.*, ch. 85, 13.

cipal figure than on the subsidiary ones. Stylistically it seems closely related to the impressive Nāgarāja (Fig. 67) that stands beside it. One curious detail that the Nāgarāja shares with the two figures along the side (Fig. 57) is the manner in which the right hand is delineated. In all three instances the hand hangs down in an identical fashion displaying almost disproportionately long fingers. The two females, both in their awkwardness and formal characteristics, are close to the Kwa bahal Hāritī, probably of the third century (Fig. 59). The modelling of the main figure, however, seems closer to the Chapagaon Brahmā (Fig. 11) or the figure of Viṣṇu in the Tilganga relief (Fig. 1), with which it also shares a similar broad necklace. Such broad necklaces, it may be pointed out, are seen more frequently in sculptures of the Kuṣāṇa period than later. A tentative date for this enigmatic sculpture would be the early fifth century, although, because of its iconographical ambiguity, the possibility of an earlier date cannot be altogether precluded.

II

A striking image of Hāritī, the Buddhist protectress of children, is still in worship in a small shrine at Balaju (Fig. 58). The local people refer to her as Ajimā or grandmother, a name evidently suggested by the child she bears in her lap. Hāritī was originally an ogress who entered the early Buddhist pantheon as protectress of the monastery and of children. There are several other images of Hāritī in the valley, thus attesting her popularity during the early Licchavi period. The most impressive example is that at Svayambhunath and she is also the most favoured of the Hāritīs today. Of the Hāritīs in Patan two are illustrated here, one without a child (Fig. 59) and the other with several (Fig. 60).

Iconographically, the simplest of the three is the Kwa bahal example (Fig. 59), in which the goddess is seated in the so-called European posture (*pralambapāda*) on a rudimentary throne.[1] Her right hand with open palm rests against her thigh while the attribute in the left hand is not recognizable. The simple ornaments consist of armlets, in the form of *makaras*, a thick necklace, heavy anklets and large gypsy ear rings. Her torso is bare and the lower garment clinging to her thighs is held by a sash that falls across the seat in a distinctive manner. The face, however, has been so completely rubbed with ritual unguents that the features are scarcely recognizable.

The Balaju Hāritī (Fig. 58) is seated in a fashion similar to that in the Kwa bahal

[1] For a discussion of this and other related sculptures see, M. Slusser, "Nepali Sculptures-New Discoveries" in *Aspects of Indian Art*, (ed. P. Pal), Leiden, 1972, pp. 93 ff.

at Patan, except that her legs are not as widely spread apart and her feet firmly placed closer together. Her anklets appear even heavier around the narrow ankles, and, among other ornaments, a necklace and heavy, pendulous earrings are now hardly recognizable. The right hand is placed firmly on her knee and holds a boss, a symbol held ubiquitously by most divinities in Nepal irrespective of their sectarian affiliation. With her left arm she holds a child, while a plain circular halo behind her head proclaims her divinity.

The third Hāritī at Patan (Fig. 60) is by far the most elaborate. The goddess is seated with her right leg semi-pendant and the left folded and placed parallel to the plane of the seat. The posture is neither the *lalitāsana* nor the *mahārājalīlā* of later Indian iconography but more or less anticipates both positions. She is rather sparsely adorned with plain bracelets, a necklace of the heavy variety and ear-ornaments. The hair appears to have been pulled up and gathered into a flat disc-like bun. Her right hand displays the ubiquitous boss, while the left holds a child. Four other children play around her, one with a ram. The front of her seat is delineated as a rocky surface with a disc or a wheel in the centre. A large portion of the stele is left unadorned except for the indication of a circular halo behind the goddess' head.

All three sculptures are characterized by a sense of monumentality in the physical proportions of the figures and a predilection for ponderous volume. These are two predominant features of the Mathura school of sculpture during the Kuṣāṇa period (ca. 1-300 A.D.). At the same time it must be asserted that the three sculptures are quite distinct in their expression of the theme. A Hāritī from Mathura (Fig. 61), generally attributed to the third century, is a very close parallel of the two Nepali Hāritīs seated in the European position (Figs. 58, 59). Here again, however, the Balaju example seems closer to the Mathura sculpture both in terms of proportions and modelling than the Patan Hāritī. The heavy, pendulous breasts, the expansive pelvic basin, the form of the anklets, the firmly planted feet and the modelling of the arms and legs are similar in both. There is also a greater linear fluency in the definition of the outline in these two sculptures than in the Kwa bahal Hāritī (Fig. 59). In the latter an abrupt and inorganic angularity characterizes the transition from the waist to the thighs. The legs are disproportionate to the torso which seems to have rather a perpendicular outline, and the breasts appear to have been grafted on the surface of the chest rather than being naturalistic outgrowths. The arms and legs are like thick stumps in contrast to the more slender and rounded limbs of the others.

Notwithstanding such differences, if the Mathura Hāritī is accepted as a sculpture of the third century, a similar date must also be attributed to the Balaju and Kwa

bahal Hāritīs (Figs. 58, 57). Moreover, neither sculpture shows any awareness of the more refined style of the Gupta period, as is evident in the Deo Patan or the Pashupatinath Devīs (Figs. 85, 216). There seems no doubt that the Balaju Hāritī (Fig. 58) is modelled closely after the Mathura sculpture (Fig. 61). In contrast the Kwa bahal Hāritī is even more primitive, reflecting perhaps the native aesthetic intent to a greater degree, as is evident in several other early sculptures (Figs. 62, 64).

The age of the second Hāritī at Patan (Fig. 60) is more difficult to determine. Regmi[1] has arbitrarily suggested a fourteenth century date but this is quite unacceptable. Although her form is still conceived following the Kuṣāṇa predilection for bulky monumentality, she reflects greater formal affinities with female sculptures of the seventh or the eighth centuries (Figs. 216, 219). The little boys are closely comparable with the child Kṛṣṇa in the Kālīyadamana relief (Fig. 90), while the kneeling boy is modelled with the same naturalistic grace that characterizes the Śaiva reliefs (Figs. 258-262). The design of Hāritī's garments as well as the disposition of her right arm is very similar to that seen in the Bihar Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu of the sixth century (Fig. 124), while the elaborate coiffure is as elegantly rendered as in the Pashupatinath Devī (Fig. 216).

As a protective goddess, especially of the *vihāra* or the monastery, Hāritī was widely worshipped in India. Originally a child-devouring ogress, she became a patron-saint of children after her conversion by the Buddha. Because of her association with children, who are particularly vulnerable to small-pox, she was confounded with the Brāhmaṇical goddess of small-pox, Śītalā, whose cult is equally popular and may have been older. Hāritī's importance seems to have diminished both in India and Nepal after the eighth century.

III

An interesting statue, now preserved in the National Museum at Kathmandu, is the so-called portrait of a king (Fig. 62). Stella Kramrisch, who first published it, described it as a royal portrait and attributed a fifth century date to it.[2] Subsequently, it has been published three times and various dates between the third and the fifth century have been suggested.[3] It must be pointed out that little or no argument has been offered for either the identification or the attributions.

[1] Regmi, *op. cit.*, II, pl. 3.
[2] S. Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
[3] *Nepalese Art*, Pl. X A, p. 77, where it is identified as a Kirāta king and dated to *ca.* third

Although the feet of the figure are missing, one can easliy imagine how they were once firmly planted on the base. The posture is emphatically frontal with a static determination that seems to be enhanced by the disposition of the arms. The right hand holds the boss, while the left clutches the projecting end of the sash resolutely. The dhoti stops short of the knees and is held together by a distinctive belt or girdle just below the waist. A portion of the sash forms a symmetrical median loop across the thighs but most of it overhangs the flanks in two stages as a formal design rather than as a naturalistic mode. The torso is completely bare and the crowned head is provided with a plain, circular nimbus. A pair of simple bangles adorn the arms and two *āmalaka*-shaped ornaments embellish the ears.

Stylistic analogies may be seen in at least two Indian images, both of Viṣṇu. One of these is in the Lucknow Museum and may be dated to the fourth century (Fig. 63). It shares with the Nepali sculpture similar figural proportions and treatment of the form, a broad, expansive chest and rather heavy, columnar legs, although the waist is fuller and not as attenuated. Equally striking is the like manner of the disposition of the hands in the two images. The two lower hands of Viṣṇu seem to be placed exactly in the same relation to the torso as in the Nepali figure, the only difference being that the Nepali sculptor has carved out the intervening space completely. Even more intriguing, however, is the relationship of the Nepali statue with the curious icon of Viṣṇu found at Hankrail in Bengal and now in the Rajshahi Museum.[1] The same flat delineation of the chest and an identical disposition of the right arm are obvious parallels. Even more convincing is the similarity of the shape and features of the physiognomy as well as of the design of the crown. While no exact date has been suggested for the Bengali sculpture, it has generally been assigned to the Kuṣāṇa period.

Unlike the Gupta images, where we usually find a string of pearls (*ekāvalī*) adorning the neck (Fig. 65), this statue has no necklace of any kind. Equally conspicuous by its absence is the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*), which is generally given to male divinities, including yakṣas, as early as the Kuṣāṇa period. The crown is of an unusual design, and to my knowledge, is not repeated in any other sculpture in Nepal. Of course, if this is a royal portrait, it may explain the absence of the sacred thread, while the coronet may preserve a type worn locally by contemporary monarchs. Perhaps, the most distinctive feature of the sculpture is its rather harsh and stern

century; Waldschmidt, *op. cit.*, Fig. 9, 4th-5th century; M. Singh, *Himalayan Art*, New York, 1969, p. 167, fourth century.

[1] R. C. Majumdar (ed.), *History of Bengal*, I, Dacca, 1963, pl. XLV, 110.

demeanour, distinguished by the curious diamond-shaped eyes. Such an expression would be unusual for a divine image. Thus, all these factors lead us to reiterate the identification of the figure as a royal portrait. If it is the image of a god, it may represent either Sūrya or a Bodhisattva, as one scholar has suggested.[1]

Apart from artistic evidence, Kuṣāṇa influence in Nepal is attested to by the use of the Śaka era in the country and the continued currency of Kuṣāṇa coinage almost until the time of Aṁśuvarman. The Mat Devakula, containing Kuṣāṇa imperial portraits, must still have been widely known in the fourth-fifth century, and there need be nothing unusual in a proud Nepali king emulating the Kuṣāṇas. It has been clearly demonstrated that the sculpture under discussion has features in common with images of the Kuṣāṇa period. Thus, a fifth century date seems overly cautious and incompatible with the stylistic evidence as offered by the Tilganga Viṣṇu of 467 A.D. (Fig. 1). However, in contrast to the Balaju Hāritī (Fig. 58), which is obviously more closely derived from a Kuṣāṇa model, the nimbate male seems to continue a native aesthetic intent as is also reflected in the Kwa bahal Hāritī (Fig. 59). Therefore, both on the consideration of internal evidence and a comparison with Indian parallels, the royal portrait could well be a sculpture of the fourth century, if not earlier.

Another such intriguing statue is preserved within a little shrine at the royal cremation ghats below the temple of Paśupatinātha (Fig. 64). Like the sculpture just discussed, this too is of modest dimensions but imparts a similar feeling for monumentality. The figure squats firmly on a plain seat with both hands resting on the knees. As is usual in Nepal, the right hand holds a boss and the left a flower bud. The median loop of the sash, of a twisted-rope-like design, is more substantial, and, curiously, the ends of the sash are carried over both arms from where they fall along the legs. The pleats of the dhoti spill over the seat in pronounced formal exuberance, and rather interesting is the spoked-wheel-like design of the nimbus. The judge's wig-like hair style and the pearl nacklace with a central sapphire are definitely Gupta features.

There is little doubt that the wheel here has a symbolic significance and indicates either the solar or Vaiṣṇava affiliation of the image. The flower-bud, probably a blue-lotus, is also ambiguous, for it may represent the lotus of either Sūrya or Viṣṇu. Images of Viṣṇu with two arms, however, are extremely rare; on the other hand, the posture is more common for icons of Sūrya than of Viṣṇu. The spoked halo also is an element of solar iconography, as seen in the much later image of Sūrya at Alampur

[1] This is the view of Mary Slusser; see p. 42, n. 1.

in India, although the wheel is one of Viṣṇu's attributes as well but is hardly ever shown as a halo. Moreover, at least one inscription of the Licchavi period attests to the antiquity of sun worship in Nepal. Thus, it seems safer to identify the figure as Sūrya rather than as Viṣṇu.

On the other hand, it cannot be overlooked that the statue may possibly represent a royal personage. What may go against its identification either as Sūrya or Viṣṇu is the absence of a crown of any kind, and I know of no image, even of an earlier period in India, where either divinity has been represented without a crown of some sort. As in the other alleged portrait (Fig. 62), here also no sacred thread is delineated, and the posture once more is reminiscent of Kuṣāṇa portraits. Although the physiognomy is totally different here, the face has a somewhat individual character and is distinguished by an enigmatic smile, while the flower-bud is held in a manner generally not seen in conventional images but more like a *līlā-kamala* in the hand of a prince. A parallel instance in India may be cited in the couch-type of coin of Candragupta II where the king holds a lotus of dalliance in his right hand. It may not be insignificant that the other portrait statue was also found in Mrigasthali, not very far from the chapel where this sculpture now resides. It is thus quite probable that in the vicinity of the temple of Paśupatinātha there was some sort of a portrait gallery of the early Licchavi monarchs, like that of the Kuṣāṇas at Mat near Mathura, and both of these statues once belonged to that gallery.

Indeed, we know for certain that the Kuṣāṇas in India had two portrait galleries, one for the southern part of their empire and the other for the northern. Although no such portraits of the Gupta monarchs have yet come to light, their likenesses are preserved on their coins, which do indicate the continued tradition of royal portraiture. The most striking literary evidence of such portrait galleries occurs in Bhāsa's *Pratimānāṭaka*, in which Bharata, because of the idealized character of the portraits, failed to recognize his ancestors, including his father.[1] I shall later discuss at least two other sculptures that may also be idealized portraits (Figs. 99, 101), and certainly, again during the Malla period, the kings of Nepal often perpetuated themselves by erecting their portraits with those of their queens in front of the temples they dedicated. Some of these will be mentioned later but they also are so idealized as to be scarcely distinguishable. In contrast, the two early statues that may be royal portraits are generalized to a lesser degree and have faces that reveal distinct personalities.

The Pashupatinath seated figure (Fig. 64) seems to combine the native propensity

[1] A. K. Coomaraswamy, *The Transformation of Nature into Art*, New York, 1956, p. 104.

for compact but sturdy physique, as seen in several early sculptures (Figs. 59, 62 and 1), with traits borrowed from India but not thoroughly digested. This becomes at once apparent if we compare this sculpture with a similarly seated figure of Yama from Bhumara (Fig. 65). The hair style and the necklace are obvious loans but the treatment of the details as well as the formal statement is totally different. The Nepali statue, while informed with a resolute vigour and spontaneous charm, lacks the refined sophistication of the Bhumara Yama. On the other hand, the spread of the legs is as emphatic and wide as we find in the Hāritī images (Figs. 58, 59), and the legs are treated in the Kuṣāṇa mode, as sturdy columns rather than as pliant limbs. Especially similar is the abrupt manner in which the outline of the torso merges into the hips in this image and in the Kwa bahal Hāritī (Fig. 59).

Thus, because of the persistence of certain Kuṣāṇa traits as well as the intrusion of Gupta features, I am inclined to suggest a late fourth century date for the sculpture. And if the statue, with its distinctively smiling but imperious countenance, is indeed a portrait rather than an image of Sūrya, it would then portray a Licchavi monarch. The nimbus in that case would symbolize his solar lineage as well as his divine right of kingship.

IV

Like the Kuṣāṇa period in India, the early Licchavi period too appears to have been one of seminal importance for Nepali iconography. This is best exemplified by the Umā-Maheśvara images, which will be discussed later, but an interesting iconic type is represented by a sculpture recovered from Naksal and now preserved in the National Museum (Fig. 66). It shows a male head, adorned with wheel-like earrings, emerging from a pot. The head is enhaloed by what appears to be the remains of a serpent hood, which is why it has been tentatively identified as a nāga. The right hand of the figure holds a boss, while the clenched fist of the left hand may have held either a rosary, as has been suggested, or a pot.

A male figure emerging from a pot reminds one immediately of Agastya, who is often described as *kumbhayoni* or *kumbhasambhava* (born of a pot). In the *Skanda Purāṇa*[1] he plays an important role in the establishment of Śiva as Kumbheśvara or the Lord of the water pot. Indeed, in the relevant section of the text, their association is so close that the very idea of Kumbheśvara seems to have been derived from that of Agastya as *kumbhayoni*. It may be recalled that in Java also the concepts of

[1] M. Jha (ed.), *Nepāla Māhātmya from Skanda Purāṇa*, Benares, 1901, p. 104.

Agastya and Śiva were similarly coalesced to give rise to the notion of Śiva-guru. The snake hood is of course an unusual attribute for either Śiva or Agastya, although the serpent is a constant companion of Śiva in one form or another. It may be mentioned further that in the *Skanda Purāṇa*,[1] along with Agastya, other sages are said to have emerged from water-pots and so the idea seems to be of an archetypal character.

While the nāga identification remains plausible, the attempt to establish an identity with Ananta or Viṣṇu is far-fetched. It is noteworthy that in Bengal the snake goddess Manasā is traditionally represented as a snake with a human head emerging from a pot. But since the head here is that of a male it may very well portray Varuṇa, who is also described in the *Nepālamahātmya* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* as emerging from a water pot (*ghaṭodbhava*).[2]

The stylistic similarity of this sculpture with the two royal portraits (Figs. 62, 64) is at once apparent. The right hand is treated in an identical fashion, while the physiognomy, betraying a slight trace of a smile, is similar to that of the seated figure. Indeed, the face is reminiscent of the mask-like faces one finds in the sculptures of the Dieng plateau in Java. In terms of formal properties the closest Indian parallel is the sixth century Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu in Cleveland (Fig. 112).

The serpent or the nāga has always played an important role in Nepali traditions, and the very origins of the valley are associated with the nāgas. Thus, the absence of early sculptures representing nāgas would be more difficult to explain than their presence. Apart from the peculiar sculpture from Naksal just discussed, there is another impressive image in the Kumbheśvara temple at Patan which may possibly belong to the early Licchavi period (Fig. 67).

Locally the figure is known as Vāsuki, a nāga devotee of Viṣṇu. The deeply carved relief shows an impressive male seated in *lalitāsana* on the coils of a nāga whose hood forms a canopy around the god's head in a manner similar to the head emerging from the pot (Fig. 66). Clad in a dhoti, his ornaments include plain bracelets, a broad and ornate necklace, substantial ear-ornaments that are somewhat abraded and a crown. A hole in the forehead indicates that a jewel once adorned his temple as is prescribed for the king of the nāgas. His left hand holds a full blown lotus and the right is placed across the thigh in the gesture of munificence.

Once more the portliness characteristic of the other early sculptures examined so far is also present in this figure. Both in its proportions and modelling the sculpture

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 105: *kumbhodbhavena muninā tapastaptva sudāruṇam.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

seems to be closely related to the Tilganga Viṣṇu vikrānta of A.D. 467 (Fig. 1). There is also a similarity in the design of the necklace and ear ornaments in both images. With the Kwa bahal Hāritī (Fig. 59) Vāsuki shares a heaviness of limbs, particularly the arms and the legs, like treatment of the right hand and, in a more telling fashion, identical delineation of the overflowing sash below the left foot. The face of Vāsuki seems somewhat sunken and is of the same type as the faces of the Naksal Varuṇa and the Mrigasthali nimbate male (Fig. 62). All this evidence clearly points to an early fifth century date for this impressive and imperious statue of the king of the serpents. Especially noteworthy are the powerful delineation of the coils of the serpent as well as the regal bearing and stately frontality of the figure as is befitting a royal personage.

The personified nāga remained a favourite theme with Nepali sculptors as will be seen later. Two more nāga sculptures, however, may be discussed here as they present stylistic problems.

One of these, now in the archaeological garden at Patan, shows a headless figure seated in a special yogic position (Fig. 69). His torso is bare except for a broad but hardly distinguishable necklace and his lower portion is clad in a dhoti. The uncommon posture seems to enhance the hieratic frontality of the figure, and to my knowledge, it is not repeated in any other example. Because of the damaged hands, a positive identification becomes difficult. If the seat represents the coils of a serpent, this may be the figure of a nāga king, in which case the hood would have formed the halo. On the other hand, it may have represented an unusual type of an image of Viṣṇu. The monumentality of the figure with its powerful modelling and impressive proportions generally points to its being a work of the Licchavi tradition. Indian parallels are difficult to cite and once again a Nepali sculptor has demonstrated his inventiveness as well as his remarkable understanding of the formal properties of sculpture in terms of plasticity and volume. Thus, the sculpture may yet be another distinguished example of the vigorous Licchavi style; on the other hand, it may well be an "archaistic" work of a later period, a possibility that cannot be ruled out in Nepal.

The second sculpture which has a definite nāga association is in a niche in the Vasantapur area of Kathmandu (Fig. 70). An elaborately crowned male is seated in *lalitāsana* on the intertwining coils of a nāga, whose hoods form an elegant canopy above the god's head. His right hand is damaged and the left holds an object that resembles a *śālagrāmaśilā*, the aniconic symbol of Viṣṇu. The figure with its polycephalous serpent hood is framed by interlaced creepers which form an elaborate

arch above the hood. Despite the curious emblem in his hand, in this instance at least the figure may with reasonable certainty be identified as a nāga king. Its stylistic position, however, is more difficult to determine. There are obvious affinities with the Cha bahil image of Siṁhanāda Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 199), which I have assigned to the Ṭhākurī period. This leads me to suggest a similar date for this sculpture too, but it remains a glaring example of the difficulties one encounters constantly in attemtpting to determine the context in which a sculpture was produced in Nepal.

V

Mrigasthali (the place of the deer), as the wooded hills around the Pashupatinath area is called, is without question an ancient site. It abounds in architectural fragments and pieces from different ages and is indeed a museum without walls. In the small temple below Paśupatināṭha, in the distinguished company of the royal figure and Vīrupākṣa (Figs. 64, 75), sits a sculpture of a deer (Fig. 71), which is considered to be Śiva in the animal's guise. Although not very accomplished, it could well be a work of the early Licchavi period.

A more mysterious image stands outside the Vanakālī temple in Mrigasthali (Figs. 72, 73). At first glance it appears as a liṅga but in reality is quite different from the conventional liṅgas (Fig. 122). The entire upper section of the shaft is carved into a human head emerging from a lotus. What lends weight to its identification as a phallic symbol is the shape of the liquid container (*jalahāri*) from which the shaft rises. This, however, is a later addition, although it is possible that the shaft was originally fixed to a similar base. If the lotus has any significance, the head may represent Brahmā who is described as having been born of a lotus (*kamalayoni*). On the other hand, the sculpture may be a hero-stone of the type found in India. If the object does represent a Śiva liṅga then the absence of the third eye seems strange. Thus, it must remain one of those peculiar iconographical enigmas of Nepal and very likely perpetuates an image type that had a local origin and significance.[1]

If its identification remains obscure, no less certain are we about its stylistic posi-

[1] It may be pointed out that this may represent the liṅga known to the author of the *Nepālamāhātmya* as Kirāteśvara (*kirāteśvaramābhyarcya sarvapāpaiḥ pramucyate*; Jha, *op. cit.*, p. 4.). It was customary in Nepal, as also in South-east Asia, to name liṅgas after the names of the donors, such as Ratneśvara after Ratnasiṅgha (Gnoli, *op. cit.*, I, p. 9), Jayeśvara after Jayavarmma (*ibid.*, p. 11), etc. Thus, a liṅga founded by the Kirātas, or a Kirāta king, may have been remembered by later chroniclers as Kirāteśvara. It seems incontestable that this head, more than any other, may claim to preserve the likeness of a "kirāta".

tion. The face has an unusual shape with peculiar features and there is nothing else in Nepal or in India with which it is comparable. The long, almost rectangular face is dominated by the enormously large and staring eyes. The eyes are somewhat similar to those of Virupākṣa (Fig. 75), but while Virupākṣa's eyes have a humane expression, the arched eyebrows of the Mrigasthali figure give them almost a sinister quality. The nose is not at all sharply defined and the lips are rather tightly compressed. The hair consisting of short curls on top and longer strands falling down to the neck and along the sides at least indicate that the head is that of an ascetic. If the head does not represent Śiva, it could well portray an eminent Śaiva teacher such as Lakulīśa.

Apart from the similarities with the figure of Virupākṣa, the only other sculpture with which it has something in common is the so called royal portrait (Fig. 62). There also we find the same snub nose and a sense of cruelty or harshness expressed by the eyes and the firm, tight lips. In all these three sculptures the facial features seem to reflect an ethnic type, quite unlike the more "Aryan" faces of the other figures. In my opinion, therefore, this peculiar head at Mrigasthali is an early sculpture that was strongly influenced by more native aesthetic standards, preserving as it does a local iconographic tradition.

The only other Śaiva sculpture that may possibly belong to the early Licchavi period is worshipped in a wayside shrine at Hyutole (Fig. 74). A pot-bellied Śiva with three heads and two arms sits in *lalitāsana* on a seat of rocks. His right hand resting against the knee displays the gesture of munificence, but the attribute in the left hand is not recognizable. A snake forms his sacred thread, and, in addition, he is ornamented with large earrings and a broad necklace of the kind seen in the Viṣṇu vikrānta relief of A.D. 467 (Fig. 1) or the Kumbheśvara Vāsuki (Fig. 67). With the latter it also shares a similar treatment of the right hand with almost disproportionately long fingers.

A figure known locally as Virupākṣa (Figs. 75-76) stands partly embedded in the floor of the same little chapel where the royal figure sits (Fig. 64). As the water level in the river changes, the sculpture emerges a little or sinks in further, a phenomenon regarded by the locals as miraculous. That the image represents a form of Śiva is evident not only from the prominent third eye on the forehead and the crescent in the hair, but also from the erect phallus. It is therefore difficult to comprehend why Madanjeet Singh chose first to label it as a portrait of a "noble man", and then discovered its sculptor succeeding "in drawing an invisible but incredibly clear line of division between the secular and religious."[1]

[1] Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 181 and 184-86.

At a first glance the sculpture seems to stand apart stylistically, but on closer scrutiny it does reveal affinities with certain other works. For instance, the ear-ornament (the *āmalaka*-shaped *kuṇḍala*) is of the same variety as those adorning the ears of the royal portrait (Fig. 62), and this type is not repeated in any other sculpture. The judge's wig-like hair, although related to the hair-style of the companion figure (Fig. 64) and that seen in some Ajanta sculptures, is really treated in a unique manner and shows a stylization peculiar only to this figure. The modelling of the torso lacks the soft, resilient and swelling quality of the Gupta style; rather, the form, in the characteristically Nepali fashion, is treated almost as a flat plane with emphasis on the geometrically conceived wide chest and heavy shoulders, reflecting a sense of elemental power. The outline of the torso is clear and sharply defined, while the arms are muscular and impart a sense of sheer physical strength.

By far the most distinctive feature of this image is its noble and distinguished face. Although it shows a general physical resemblance to the royal visage in the Mrigasthali sculpture (Fig. 62), its bearing is less harsh but equally imperious. The nose is comparatively better defined but still retains a broadness that reflects a distinct ethnic stamp. The lips have a similar formal determination but are more substantially delineated, and the whole face is indeed more full and fleshy. The most arresting features of the face, however, are the beautifully shaped eyes. The pupils, rendered naturalistically, make the gaze startlingly penetrating with an almost mesmerizing effect. Thus, while the image conforms to certain general stylistic conventions already well formulated, nonetheless, it is manifestly an individualistic creation. And once again as we admire the inventiveness of yet another unknown Nepali sculptor, a definite chronological attribution remains problematic. In general, I am inclined to consider it as a sculpture of the Licchavi period, perhaps of the sixth century.

VI

There are at least two Buddhist sculptures in the Svayambhunath area that present us with interesting stylistic problems. One of these is a small monolithic stūpa; its elongated shaft rises from a lotus base and is surmounted by a hemispherical dome (Fig. 77). On each face of the shaft is carved in moderate relief a figure of a standing Buddha. Two of the Buddhas make the gestures of assurance (*abhaya*) and munificence (*varada*) with their right hands, while the other two display gestures that are not clearly defined. Possibly one of the gestures is a crude version of that known as

turning the wheel of the Law (*dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*). The other may be a rudimentary form of a gesture that origininated in Gandhāra and later became popular in Japanese Buddhist iconography, where it is known as *chiken-in* and is given to Dainichi or Vairocana.

The general modelling and the treatment of the drapery appear as rather distant echoes of Sarnath models, although a parallel nearer home is the Cha bahil Buddha (Fig. 166). What is definitely not Sarnath, apart from the clumsy gestures, is the delineation of the broad and Mongoloid face. The profile reveals its astonishing flatness, especially of the nose and the scarcely defined mouth, whereas in Gupta sculptures these features are invariably rendered with precise articulation. The Mongoloid ethnic strain is even more emphatically manifest in the slanting eyes, although following the Gupta manner the eyelids are almost fully closed.

It is conceivable that this may represent one of the earliest attempts by a Nepali sculptor to imitate a Sarnath Buddha, perhaps from a tiny plaque rather than a fully carved model. In that case it must have been sculpted earlier than the mid-fifth century and at a time when the gestures had not been perfected in India. The alternate possibility is that the rather unsure delineation of the hands betrays the Nepali artist's inadequate understanding of the gestures. However, if it were a later sculpture such unfamiliarity with the gestures would be difficult to comprehend, and only at a transitional stage, presumably before the sixth century, could there have been such a confusion.

On the other hand, little is known of the antiquity of the site of Svayambhūnātha and its first definite mention occurs in a manuscript[1] copied in A.D. 1071. Both from epigraphical and literary testimony, however, we learn that in A.D. 1349 the monastery and the stūpa were totally destroyed by Sultan Samsud-din of Bengal and partly rebuilt in 1372. The extent of the destruction can be measured by the fact that, apart from the monument under discussion (Fig. 77), only one other sculpture in the area may have escaped the iconoclastic zeal of the invaders, although it is curious that neither of these shows even a surface scratch.[2] Thus, unless they are regarded as miraculous survivals, they present us with almost insoluble problems in the history of Nepali sculpture.

The second enigmatic sculpture at Svayambhunath is a massive image of the Buddha (Fig. 78), apparently similar to the other large icon in the area mentioned above. Goetz, who first published it, suggested a sixth century date, while Regmi has

[1] A. Foucher, *Étude sur l'iconographie bouddhique de l'Inde*, Paris, 1900, p. 214.
[2] Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

assigned it to the ninth.[1] Even if we assume that this sculpture also escaped defilement, a comparison with Buddha images of the Licchavi and the Ṭhākurī periods (Figs. 167, 172, 176) reveals details that are totally anachronistic for a work of either period. As a motif decorating the aureole the flame was added to the sculptor's repertoire not much earlier than the eighth century, which would certainly rule out the possibility of a sixth century date for the Svayambhunath image. In the majority of the steles surviving from the Ṭhākurī period the design is well-weathered—as indeed it should be—but in the Svayambhunath example it is not only more flamboyant but the carving is crisp and fresh. Moreover, in the images of the Ṭhākurī period, the same motif is repeated, often in combination with the pearl design, along the smaller nimbus as well, but in no sculpture earlier than the fifteenth century does a rosette appear on the nimbus. The lotus support for the right hand would be as unusual for an early image as is the absence of the webbed fingers, although the webbing was discarded occasionally. Further, the designed border of the garment, the prominent *urṇā* on the forehead, and the extra lump above the cranial protuberance (*uṣṇīṣa*) are also features not seen in Buddha images earlier than the fifteenth century. What finally clinches the case for a late date is the dress worn by the tiny donors on the pedestal. It reproduces clothes fashionable in the sixteenth century or later.

In all likelihood the sculpture is of the same vintage as the giant seated images at the foot of the hill and certainly cannot be assigned to a date earlier than the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, it reveals the Nepali sculptor's uncanny facility to copy an ancient and sacrosanct icon faithfully. In this instance the model must have been the earlier monumental image standing nearby.[2]

Another peculiar image of the Buddha, which must once have graced a Licchavi caitya, is that stuck above a bathing fountain in Patan (Fig. 79). The design of the partly visible pillar is simpler than that in the Dhvaka baha caitya (Fig. 13). However, stylistically, the figure is only vaguely related to the Sarnath type, and the left hand is suspended near the waist as in the Cha bahil Buddha (Fig. 166). The unduly thick underlip gives it a distinctive physiognomy and the slim and attenuated body seems hardly to conform to the ideal proportions of a Gupta Buddha. Nonetheless, the image is endowed with considerable charm and may well be a work where the native aesthetic intent proved stronger than the foreign prototype.

[1] H. Goetz, *Studies in the History and Art of Kashmir and the Indian Himalaya*, Wiesbaden, 1969, pl. XLVII.
Regmi, *op. cit.*, Pt. I, pl. 1.
[2] See p. 54, n. 2.

Equally problematic are fragments that are scattered around, such as the examples in the temple at Harigaon (Fig. 80) or a section of a pillar at Pashupatinath (Fig. 82). Harigaon is, of course, an ancient site and was probably a flourishing town during the Licchavi period. Although badly damaged, the Harigaon bust (Fig. 80) seems to have been multi-headed and may have represented the Vaikuṇṭha form of Viṣṇu. A cursory comparison with a Mathura sculpture (Fig. 81) clearly discloses their stylistic relationship. It will be evident from the discussions in subsequent chapters that Mathura must have been one of the most important stylistic sources for Nepal, and yet, so far only one Mathura head, probably of an image of Śiva, has been discovered in the valley (Fig. 83). The pillar fragment with the delightful gaṇa (comical dwarf) at the base (Fig. 82) must also be related to the Gupta tradition, although this may well be an example of the late Licchavi period. The chest and the belly of the dwarf are distinguished by a serpentine element that is typical of Gupta gaṇas as seen at Bhumara or Panna and has also been employed in the magnificent image of Varāha at Dhumvarahi (Fig. 92).

Some of the most fascinating reliefs and fragments may be seen below the spouts in the innumerable bathing places in the valley. One such relief (Fig. 84) shows a crouching dwarf with a grimacing face. From the way the sculptor has delineated the receding rock formation on the left, it seems as if he not only intended to show the dwarf as leering out of a cave but also to add a feeling of depth. Together with the beard, the moustache, the unnatural eyes, and the frowning eyebrows, the contorted posture enhances the grotesqueness of the figure, who probably represents a yakṣa. The function of such figures was to protect the bathing fountains from evil spirits, and hence they were given such terrifying appearances, although the proclivity for caricature may have been equally strong. At the same time the sculptor's flair for style is manifest in the beautifully rendered hair and in the symmetrical design of the garment's frill that partly covers the generous belly.

It seems clear that such grotesque and often humourous themes provided the artists with the much needed opportunity to exploit their inventiveness and whimsy. Both in India and in Nepal the artist was generally called upon to represent forms that served a strictly religious purpose. Whenever the themes demanded the portrayal of the grotesque, such as yakṣas, gaṇas or rākṣasas, the artist's delight and sense of humour resulted in the animated and lively delineation of these creatures of fancy. The rock formation in the Nepali relief is so conventional and stylized that it affords no stylistic clue for the determination of its date. But, whatever the date, it remains one of the most expressive portrayals of a grotesque yakṣa in Nepali art.

VII

An elegant but somewhat damaged image of a goddess, which originally stood in Deo Patan, is now in a private collection in America (Fig. 85). The posture is strictly frontal and the somewhat dumpy torso is supported by heavy and columnar legs. As if to compensate for the hieratic formalism of the figure with its left arm akimbo, the sculptor has treated the plant motifs with manifest exuberance. A seventh century date has been suggested for the figure, although no reasons are adduced.[1]

An analysis of the formal properties of the work shows a curious ambivalence between the static and the dynamic. The pleats of the garment, both along and between the legs, fall in perfectly straight lines and without any rhythmic movement. As they frame the legs, the pleats seem to emphasize the rotund volumes of the limbs. The torso and the breasts are comparatively less sumptuous than the swelling thighs and luxuriant hips. In contrast to the geometrical formalism in the delineation of the plastic mass, the outline, despite the obtrusion of the girdle and the awkwardly placed left hand, is informed with a sinuous rhythm that is eagerly and exuberantly picked up by the floral stalks emerging from the pedestal. As curious as the disposition of the left hand is,—perhaps reflecting a Kuṣāṇa mannerism (Fig. 61)—the treatment of the overhanging mass of pleated drapery is not seen in other Nepali sculptures. The necklace appears to have been rather substantial and heavy as is also the bangle, but conspicuous by their absence are the armlets, invariably adorning almost all female figures.

If this is a work of the seventh century, as has been suggested, it has little in common with the female form as conceived by contemporary Indian artists. A greater restraint characterizes the modelling and the composition shows a penchant for geometrical formalism—hardly perceptible in seventh century Indian sculpture—and as we have said, an ambivalent relation between static hieraticism and dynamic rhythm. Curiously, the two ends of the goddess' drapery seem to be exact replicas of the sash-ends in a fifth century image of Avalokiteśvara from Sarnath (Fig. 22), while the foliage motif on the pedestal echoes the design of the crown of Yama in the Bhumara relief (Fig. 65). Within the country the goddess does bear a formal relationship with the royal portrait (Fig. 62), both in the general proportions as well as in its austere frontality, although the modelling of the female figure seems better assured and tempered by the elegance of the Gupta style.

It would be instructive to compare the Deo Patan Devī with a similar sculpture

[1] Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 55. The sculpture now belongs to Dr. Kramrisch.

now standing in the courtyard of the Kumbheśvara temple in Patan (Fig. 143). As in the Deo Patan Devī, the legs here are columnar and rigid and support expansive hips, although the garment does not drape the same swelling volumes. Despite an identical manner of executing the folds between the legs, an attempt has been made to indicate the mass of the garment along the sides more naturalistically. Strikingly analogous also is the treatment of the feet and the heavy anklets, and the necklace appears to be of the same design in both. But otherwise the ornaments are different. While the waist of the Kumbheśvara Pārvatī shows greater attenuation, the breasts, now almost flat, are lightly caressed by flimsy drapery that disappears over the left shoulder to reappear below the left hand which holds the stem of a flower.

The direct and formal relationship of the Kumbheśvara Pārvatī (Fig. 143) and the Deo Patan Devī (Fig. 85) is beyond doubt. However, because of certain other prominent stylistic traits, it is easier to suggest at least a general chronological position for the Pārvatī. The design of the crown and of the ornaments, the treatment of the drapery and of the lotus against which the right hand rests, are comparable to female forms conceived by the artists of the Ṭhākurī or the early Malla periods (Figs. 228, 232). Moreover, the oval nimbus with its prominent flame and bead border almost definitely precludes the possibility of it being a work of the early Licchavi period.

It must be admitted that the Deo Patan Devī, like the royal portraits or the image of Virupākṣa (Figs. 62, 64, 75), is a unique sculpture, as unique as a sculpture can be within the limitations of an overbearing religious tradition. It can also be postulated that it was the prototype of the Kumbheśvara image rather than the contrary. If it is a seventh century sculpture, as has been suggested, it must be clearly distinguished from other seventh century works, where we witness a better assimilation of the Gupta tradition, typified by a more linear treatment of the form and less hieratic formalism. It seems as if the sculptor, although aware of the Gupta style of Sarnath (the similarity in the treatment of the ends of the drapery and the Bodhisattva's sash could hardly be fortuitous), was determined to ride above the wave rather than succumb to it completely. Stylistically, the Deo Patan Devī appears to be a product of the native tradition tempered by the Gupta style, as is seen in the Cha bahil Buddha (Fig. 166) or Gana bahal Padmapāṇi (Fig. 8), in which case the sixth century would be the most acceptable date. A highly abraded female figure in the Mrigasthali area (Fig. 86) gives us some idea of the sort of prototype that the sculptor may have followed. At the same time the persistence of stylistic features of the Deo Patan Devī for many centuries (Fig. 143) is astonishing, and once again, demonstrates the difficulties in attempting a stylistic analysis of Nepali sculpture.

VIII

A frequently reproduced sculpture from Nepal is the Deo Patan relief of the Nativity of the Buddha (Fig. 87). Most authors have suggested a ninth century date for it, except one who places it in the late tenth century.[1] According to Stella Kramrisch, who first published it, "her body carries the memories of the form of Gauri and of Yakshinis from Mathura . . . The face of Maya Devi and the form of the Buddha child seem related to types from Bihar of the eighth to ninth century."[2] Madanjeet Singh, however, considers the elongated form of Māyā Devī characteristic of the Pāla style of the tenth century, and hence suggests a late tenth century date.[3]

While the form of Māyā has little in common with that of Gaurī, presumably the Deo Patan Devī (Fig. 85), the memories of Mathura yakṣīs are indeed vague. Perhaps, the most peculiar characteristic of the figure is the extreme attenuation and elongation of the form with an emphatic sinuousity also echoed by the branch she holds. Such an elongation is rarely seen in other Nepali sculptures except in wooden figures that embellish temples of the Ṭhākuri or early Malla periods (Figs. 235, 236). A like attenuation of the waist and the strongly linear quality of the form—with rather small breasts—as well as a similar design of the garment, may be found in a relief that may belong to the end of the Licchavi period (Fig. 179); but otherwise the two figures are products of different concepts of form. Or again, in a bronze (Fig. 224) of perhaps the tenth century, we notice the same predilection for slimness, but hardly such disproportionate attenuation of the waist, while the pleats of the garment in the bronze are treated with more naturalistic animation. The pleats of Māyā's garment, however, fall with a stiffness and a wooden quality seen in several other sculptures of different periods (Figs. 85, 232) but mostly prominent in wooden figures (Fig. 235). Among relatively close parallels are the figures of Lakṣmī in the Pharphing Viṣnu vikrānta stele (Fig. 4) and in a fragmentary Viśvarūpa relief,[4] both of the thirteenth century. Although Māyā is more sinuous, with both Lakṣmīs she has the girdle, the armlet, the earrings as well as the physiognomical features in common.

[1] Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-3; *Nepalese Art*, p. 78; Waldschmidt, *op. cit.*, fig. 13; Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 188.

[2] Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

[3] Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 201. As a matter of fact while attributing the sculpture to the tenth century, Singh also compares her form with Ajanta females of the fifth century.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 189. Singh dates this fragment to the early ninth century, but surely it is a work of the same atelier as the Changu Narasiṁha, for which Singh, more realistically, suggests a twelfth-thirteenth century date (p. 171).

If the figure of Māyā seems to conform to the stylistic norms of the Malla period, that of Siddhārtha tells a different story. The newly born Siddhārtha stands on a lotus rather stiff and erect, like the trunk of the tree, and in marked contrast to Māyā's serpentine form. He shares similar formal properties with the two divine children hovering in the clouds and showering lotuses on the child miraculously brought forth by Māyā. All three children in the Nativity stele are of the same type as the boys in the Śaiva reliefs (Fig. 258), the little Kṛṣṇa in the Kālīyadamana sculpture (Fig. 91) or the boys in the Patan Hāritī (Fig. 59), belonging to the Licchavi period. It is worth noting that Siddhārtha's nimbus is plain as was common in steles of the early period, and I know of no image after the eighth century where the nimbus does not have the familiar pearl and flame design.

I have already mentioned that scholars have suggested an obvious relationship between this stele and those of the Pāla period in eastern India portraying the same theme. It may be instructive for more reasons than one to compare the relief with a Pāla work of about the ninth century (Fig. 88). While there is a basic similarity in the type and posture of the figures of Māyā—in fact the type is an adaptation of the more ancient tree-dryad or *sālabhañjikā* motif of early Indian art—the formal treatment of the two figures, as well as details such as the ornaments and the garments, are totally different. What is also curious about the Nepali Māyā is that the artist has left her torso completely naked and without the scarf that is seen in all Pāla reliefs. Moreover, in no Pāla expression of the theme do we find Māyā raising both her hands to clasp the branch. Indeed, the awkwardness of the Nepali Māyā's left hand is very evident and, here again, there is an obvious affinity with the wooden tree-dryads of the thirteenth century (Figs. 235, 236). Neither the face of Māyādevī nor the form of the child Siddhārtha is related to the types seen in this or other Pāla reliefs of the eighth and ninth centuries. In fact, Siddhārtha in the Pāla steles is usually just a diminutive Buddha, while the Nepali sculptor has at least attempted to portray a child by providing him with a baby face and a bloated belly. It seems unnecessary to carry the comparison any further, but what does become evident, which will be emphasized later, is that the influence of the Pāla style on the art of Nepal is not as pronounced as scholars have presumed it to be.

This lengthy discussion, however, leaves us in no better position to suggest a firm date for the Nativity relief. The overlapping of styles and motifs of apparently different periods is astonishingly baffling. Despite the close analogies with wooden figures of the Ṭhākurī period or later—and it must be borne in mind that wood is rather a conservative material that retains styles and forms for a longer period than

stone or bronze—so late a date seems difficult to accept in view of the other factors. Moreover, the artist was certainly more than aware of the Licchavi style, characteristics of which he attempted to assimilate. At the same time, there are stylistic affinities as much with sculptures of the tenth as with those of the thirteenth century. It seems, therefore, that either it is a work of the end of the Licchavi period, or it reflects a synthetic style of its own that could hardly have been created before the thirteenth century. In that case, it may very well be a late copy of a Licchavi stele.

Whatever its date, the relief shows a clarity in the composition and a sense of linear design that make it a work of considerable charm and elegance. In the treatment of the clouds and the tree we once again see the inventiveness of yet another Nepali sculptor. The clouds are almost abstract designs, but quite different from the scale-like clouds etched on other steles (Fig. 4). Indeed, their shapes seem to echo the plastic sinuousity of the outline of Māyā's torso. In contrast, the leaves of the tree have a flat, geometric simplicity and the degree of conceptualization is further evident from the three different kinds of flowers that adorn the tree. Neither the blossoms nor the leaves are of a mango tree, although the fruit appears to be a mango. The artist was obviously interested in re-creating a tree, filled with fruits and flowers of his own liking, rather than imitating one.

IX

To sum up, it is quite clear from the above discussion that when in A.D. 467 Mānadeva commissioned his Viṣṇu vikrānta image there was already a well-established tradition of sculpture in Nepal. The few sculptures which, with some certainty, may be attributed to the third and fourth centuries seem generally to echo the styles of the Kuṣāṇa period, particularly of the Mathura school. This is not altogether surprising, and although we have no direct evidence of any contact between Nepal and the Kuṣāṇa empire, commercial and religious motivations must have led to an exchange of visitors between the heartland of the empire and this mountain-girt valley. Several indirect evidences can be cited to indicate some sort of intercourse between early Licchavi Nepal and Kuṣāṇa India.

The Licchavis who moved into Nepal, perhaps sometime in the first century A.D., must have maintained close contacts with their original homeland in the Vaiśāli area. From the time of the Buddha, and certainly during the Maurya period, Nepal was trading with India in wool and woolen products. There is no reason to believe that this trade did not continue to flourish during the Kuṣāṇa period, which was an

era of unprecedented growth in Indian commerce. More positively the cultural influences of Kuṣāṇa India on Nepal are attested to by the adoption of the Śaka era in that country and the continued use of Kuṣāṇa coinage at least until the time of Aṁśuvarman in the early seventh century. Indeed, such protracted circulation of Kuṣāṇa currency almost three centuries after the dissolution of the empire in northwest India is a further testimony to the essentially conservative character of Nepali society.

A comparison between the Balaju Hāritī (Fig. 58) and that from Mathura (Fig. 61) clearly reveals the extent of Mathura influence on Nepali sculpture. At the present state of our knowledge, however, there is no way of determining whether there was any influence from Gandhāra. Although the Svayambhunath Hāritī and that from Patan (Fig. 60) reflect a compositional arrangement as well as a naturalistic delineation of the children reminiscent of Hāritī-Pañcika reliefs of Gandhāra, the treatment of the form is certainly more akin to that of the Mathura school of the Kuṣāṇa period. The Mathura predilection for elementary volume and awesome formalism, rather than the dry naturalism of Gandhāra, seems to characterize the early Nepali sculptures.

As the stylistic influences from Mathura were seeping into Nepal, a more primitive and native tradition appears to have been persisting side by side. Although this native tendency is neither easily discerned nor defined, certain elements in such sculptures as the early Hāritī (Fig. 59), the so called portraits (Figs. 62-64) or the splendid Vāsuki (Fig. 67), reflect, however tenuously, an indigenous aesthetic intent. These elements may be defined as follows: an archaic heaviness in the form, rather perfunctory definition of the outline, somewhat squat proportions and a distinct type of face with a strong Mongoloid strain in the features. As we shall see later, some of these traits will reappear to a greater or lesser degree in the occasional sculpture throughout the Licchavi period. It must also be stressed here once more that over the years, no matter how strong the Indian influence, a Nepali *kunstwollen* remains distinctively recognizable in every work of art.

While the progression of style from the Kuṣāṇa to the Gupta period in India is not dramatic, it is certainly definite, as definite as the change in the literary style in Sanskrit from Aśvaghoṣa to Kālidāsa. The transition involved a fundamental change in the basic concept of form—from the earthly, ponderous and massive bulk of the Kuṣāṇa sculptures, imbued with an elemental vitality and natural grace, to the more sophisticated and attenuated modelling determined by stricter canons of proportions and defined by greater linear fluency and elegance. In the sculpture of the Kuṣāṇa period, whether in Mathura yakṣīs, Karli donors or Amarāvatī reliefs, there is a sense

of physical grandeur and unabashed delight in the luxuriant abundance of form, as if the sculptors wanted to overawe the viewer with the sheer physical presence of the gods. The iconography is relatively simple, and this encouraged a formal expression that saw everything in terms of aggregates of simple volumes arranged in essential planes. In the high Gupta style of the fifth century the physical abundance of the Kuṣāṇa period has been contained and the sensuousness more restrained, although there is no loss of the eminent tactile quality that is basically Indian. The form is more idealized and lyrical and reflects greater sophistication and elegance due to increasing linearization. A similar transition is also apparent in Nepali sculpture; while the Kuṣāṇa tradition lingers well into the fifth century, the characteristics of the Gupta style seem better assimilated in the sixth and the seventh.

Finally, it is more than apparent that a study of the history of Nepali sculpture is beset with stylistic enigmas. The absence of sufficiently dated material encourages ambiguous and wild speculations. Even when works are firmly datable, the fact that the art was called upon primarily to serve religion was in itself a delimiting factor for any radical stylistic changes. The perpetuation of the iconic formula was considered an essential virtue which meant a much longer survival of a style. This is particularly true of bronzes where models and patterns are likely to survive for an extended period. In addition, it was considered perfectly normal to copy ancient and sacred images; and this also contributed to the greater, and for the art-historian exasperating, tenacity of a given style.

CHAPTER THREE

VAIṢṆAVA SCULPTURE

I

It is rather curious that virtually all early sculptures of monumental dimensions in Nepal represent Vaiṣṇava themes. Equally pertinent is the fact that all heroic themes in Nepali sculpture are related to the cult of Viṣṇu. Although Nepal is primarily a Śaiva country, and in India sites such as Ellora are renowned for their gigantic reliefs showing Śiva as a heroic figure, only the Vaiṣṇavas in Nepal seem to have given us plastic versions of the mighty deeds of Viṣṇu as recorded in the Purāṇas.

I have already discussed the four reliefs (Figs. 1-4) in the valley which portray the myth of the striding Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu vikrānta). Certainly one of these, if not two, were commissioned by the great Mānadeva, the founder of the glory of the Licchavi dynasty. Although the evidence is slender and indirect, it is possible that some of the Licchavi monarchs were followers of Viṣṇuism. But the most avowed Vaiṣṇava of the period appears to have been the *de facto* ruler Viṣṇugupta who wielded power while a puppet Licchavi, Bhimārjunadeva, sat on the throne (ca. 640). Viṣṇuism seems to have gathered momentum in North India during the rule of the imperial Guptas, some of whom were devout Vaiṣṇavas. The giant Varāha rescuing the earth, carved at Udaygiri, very likely symbolizes the imperial valour of Chandragupta II who had rid the empire of the Śaka menace. In a similar symbolic sense Mānadeva may have chosen the theme of the striding Viṣṇu to announce his regal splendour and crown his conquests. And it was certainly this same predilection for claiming divine status, if not the divine right of kingship, that led the more egotistical Viṣṇugupta to liken himself unto Viṣṇu in a mammoth image that still stands in an unpretentious temple near that of Paśupatinātha.[1]

Equally spectacular is the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu at Budhanilkanth (Fig. 12) that the Gopālarāja *Vaṁśāvalī* attributes very positively to the benefaction of Viṣṇugupta.

[1] That Viṣṇugupta installed a gigantic sculpture of Viṣṇu on the bank of the river Bagmati, near the temple of Paśupatinātha, is known from the Gopālarāja *Vaṁśāvalī* (Regmi, *op. cit.*, III, p. 117). But the credit for rediscovering this sculpture is due entirely to Dr. Mary Slusser and Gautamvajra Vajracaryya, who have jointly written an article about it, to be published shortly in the *Artibus Asiae*.

A work of imposing dimensions, the sculpture lies in a water tank and may be viewed fully only during the dry season. I have already discussed the epigraphical evidence that establishes the date of this sculpture as ca. A. D. 642.

The invocatory couplet in the inscription describes the supine form of Viṣṇu in colourful language. The god is said to be of pleasing and tranquil appearance as he reclines gracefully on the cushion-like coils of the serpent Ananta. The texts tell us that Viṣṇu is always asleep (*yoganidrā*) on a bed of serpents in the cosmic ocean and wakes up only when a specific task is to be performed. The bed of serpent at Budhanilkanth is indeed impressive, and the convulsively intertwined coils seem to symbolize the writhing torments and tensions of the phenomenal world. As if in contrast the benign sustainer of the universe, imperturbable and detached, reclines on this extraordinary couch in complete self-assurance, with his wide open eyes gazing vacuously at infinity. Viṣṇu's head is sheltered by the multiple hoods of Ananta, and his legs cross at the ankles in a relaxed fashion. His raised upper hands hold the wheel of life and the mace that destroys illusion, while the other two, stretching along the body, carry the lotus-seed, symbolizing his creative aspect, and the conch which makes the primordial sound that pervades the universe. The wheel, of course, becomes a discus and a weapon of destruction when necessary. It may be pointed out that the manner of holding the wheel and the conch was continued for centuries and may be regarded as a stylistic cliché favoured by the Nepali artists.

Compared to the two inscribed Viṣṇu vikrānta reliefs (Figs. 1, 2) or the sixth century Gana bahal Bodhisattva (Fig. 8), the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu is a better-proportioned figure displaying the sculptor's complete self-assurance in the treament of the form as well as of the material. The penchant for bulkiness remains, however, in the broad, expansive chest, the wide shoulders (*vṛṣaskandha*) and in the solid, columnar legs and arms. The shape of the face is almost square and the physiognomical features, following the classical norms of Gupta India, are delineated articulately. The serpent armlets and the median loop of the sash are somewhat simple and flat, and an additional waist band (*udarabandha*) appears to be introduced here for the first time.

Several sculptors must have worked together on such a gigantic sculpture, and yet, in the boldness of its execution and in the harmony of composition, it appears to be the product of a single mind. One is reminded at once of some of the mammoth sculptures in India, such as the Udaygiri or Badami sculptures, the Parel Śiva or the Mamallapuram Jalaśayana Viṣṇu. Each is a cosmic theme and each seems to express a vision that transcends the limitations of the human mind. All these sculptures share a quality of awe-inspiring grandeur that was, perhaps, intentionally

induced in order to overwhelm the credulous devotee, or as in this instance in Nepal, to proclaim the power and majesty of a royal donor.

In Wright's *Vaṁśāvalī* we are informed that the seventeenth century king of Kathmandu, Pratāpamalla, recovered a Jalaśayana image from Gyaneshvara and reinstalled it in a courtyard of his palace[1] (Fig. 89). It is not improbable that this is the same image referred to in king Aṁśuvarman's inscription of A.D. 610. The inscription provides us with a list of shrines to which the king made cash donations and one among these was the temple of Jalaśayana at Bhumbhukkikā.[2] If the sculpture in the Kathmandu palace is, indeed, the same as that mentioned in Aṁśuvarman's inscription, then it must be earlier than the Budhanilkanth Jalaśayana and may even have served as its prototype. Stylistically, both sculptures appear to be very similar, although the Kathmandu image is neither as imposing nor as assuredly executed as Viṣṇugupta's Jalaśayana. Until the sculpture can be closely examined a definite opinion must be reserved.

There are two other examples of Jalaśayana Viṣṇu, although both are less spectacular than the one at Budhanilkanth. The Balaju Jalaśayana is stylistically akin to the Budhanilkanth image, but is of more modest dimensions. The remaining sculpture at Palanchoke is artistically the least distinguished of the four and is of indifferent craftsmanship.

II

The second sculpture that the antiquarian king Pratāpamalla recovered and reinstalled in the Kathmandu palace portrays the Kālīyadamana theme[3] (Figs. 90, 91). Kāliya was an aquatic monster who not only polluted the waters of the river Yamunā, but was also a menace to the cowherds and their cows. The demon was finally subdued by the child Kṛṣṇa. It is difficult to imagine any period in Nepali history other than the Licchavi when such a monumental work could have been conceived and executed. It is certainly related to the Budhanilkanth Jalaśayana (Fig. 12), espec-

[1] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

[2] Gnoli, *op. cit.*, I, p. 50. The suggestion that Pratāpamalla's Jalaśayana image may well be that of Bhumbukkikā was first made by Mary Slusser.

[3] Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 146. "He then set up in the Sundara-chok an image of Narayana, in the attitude of riding on the Kala Nag after vanquishing him, and along with him he placed an image of Garuda. Both of these images had been found in a place called Sakonha in the Sankasya-nagari".

The crown on Kṛṣṇa's head, as seen in Fig. 103, is modern and is added on ceremonial occasions.

ially in the delineation of the spectacular serpent with its gigantic and convoluting coils, and reflects the same bold aesthetic vision and heroic imagination.

The Kālīyadamana sculpture remains one of the most dynamic portrayals of a religious subject in Nepal. The giant aquatic monster rises like a mountain, expressing with his writhing, enmeshed coils tremendous power and tension. A *gopa* couple appears through the coils with palms enjoined in reverence, gratified at the prospect of deliverance from the tyranny of the monster. Kālīya's defiance is subtly expressed by his militant posture, employing the heroic diagonal, but nevertheless, he is calm and collected, and surprised but unshaken by the audacity of the precocious child. Indeed, Kālīya seems to have forgotten to strike and holds his weapon, which is a snake, in an irresolute fashion. Even more sensitive and expressive is the portrayal of the child-god, whose relaxed and easy posture only accentuates his inherent strength. He is still the plump child, his belly bloated by the milk and butter he stealthily consumed from his foster mother's larder. And like a rustic shepherd boy he is naked except for a strip of loin cloth that emphasizes his rotund belly. With effortless grace and a smiling countenance that betrays his self-confidence, he is about to strike the astonished monster with only an improvised whip. Rarely has a Nepali sculptor—or for that matter his Indian counterpart—displayed such understanding of the psychology involved in the dramatic conflict between a child self-assured in his divinity and a monster arrogant in his self-delusion. Furthermore, the artist has effectively employed a pyramidal composition with the hero-child at the apex so that the beholder's eyes inevitably rise from the earthly bulk of the serpent mass to the calm buoyancy of the supramundane.

The heroic aspect of Viṣṇu, as manifested in his incarnations, gained supremacy in India during the Gupta period. This is attested to not only by the fact that the major Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas composed during this period especially extol Viṣṇu's heroism, but also by the extant artistic remains. It appears as if the Vaiṣṇavas of the period made a concerted effort through both the verbal and the visual media to propagate their faith. Moreover, the heroic quality of the themes often led to the creation of powerful sculptures of immense proportions. In no other visual medium but stone could the artist have expressed the grandeur and majesty manifest in such a cosmic concept as the Boar incarnation, when Viṣṇu, in the form of a boar, rescued the earth from below the ocean.

Only a master could have taken a block of stone and given it life with such elemental power and passion as we see in the Dhumvarahi Varāha (Fig. 92). Although the serpent once again reflects the Nepali sculptor's sensitive perception of the basic

nature of the reptile, he is here reduced to size, so to speak, and in total submission supports the god's left foot. It may be pointed out that the serpent here symbolizes the nether regions from where the Earth was rescued. The imposing form of the Boar with its swelling planes, as if unable to contain his inherent strength, the firm stride and the determined disposition of the right arm strongly emphasize his cosmic nature, for he is the Ādivarāha, the macrocosmic source of the universe. In contrast, the Earth's insignificance is expressed by her personification as a helpless female perched on Varāha's elbow in the attitude of adoration.

In India, whether at Udaygiri or in a Gupta sculpture from Mathura (Fig. 93), which may have been a distant prototype for the Nepali image, or in the example from Bihar (Fig. 94), Varāha has always been conceived as a god of gigantic proportions, his form adhering to the canons prescribed for a *deva*. Although the unknown Nepali master has given him therio-anthropomorphic form, he has envisioned him as a primeval boar. The animal power is well-expressed within the anthropomorphic structure, especially in the articulately distinguished planes of the swelling chest and the protruding volume of the stomach. This, indeed, is the auspicious supporter of the earth who "emitted a low murmuring sound, like the chanting of the Samaveda; and the mighty boar, whose eyes were like the full blown lotus, and whose body, vast as the Nila mountain, was of the dark colour of the lotus leaves, uplifted upon his ample tusks the Earth from the lowest regions . . ."[1]

It has recently been suggested that the sculpture belongs to the fifth century.[2] I have elsewhere attributed it to the sixth,[3] but it now appears that the seventh century must have been the most appropriate time for its creation. Clearly it is the product of the same dynamic vision and creative ambiance that inspired the other monumental sculptures in the valley (Figs. 12, 90). Curiously, in the Gopālarāja *Vaṁśāvalī* there is a reference to the establishment of a shrine of Dharaṇī Varāha during the reign of the Guptas.[4] This may well be an allusion to the image now known as Dhum-

[1] Quoted from Wilson's *Viṣṇupurāṇa* by A. Boner, *Principles of Composition in Hindu Sculpture*, Leiden, 1962, p. 107.

[2] Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[3] Pal, *op. cit.*, fig. 5.

[4] Regmi, *op. cit.*, III, p. 118. The relevant section reads: *rājā śrī Bhūmigupta varṣa 45 tena nepāle golā nāma akṣara pravartate // dharaṇī vārāha Viṣṇu pratiṣṭhitaṁ eta traya gopāla rājya karoti //* If this Bhūmigupta is the Bhaumagupta of the Licchavi inscriptions, then he was merely a powerful feudal chief of the sixth century. In point of fact, he is mentioned twice in inscriptions, once as Bhaumagupta (Gnoli, *op. cit.*, I, p. 26) where he styles himself only as a *mahāpratihāra* or the commander-in-chief, and again as Bhūmigupta (*ibid.*, p. 71), when Jiṣṇugupta refers to him as a king and as his grandfather. We do know, however, that both Jiṣṇugupta and his

varahi. In view of the fact that Viṣṇugupta was involved with the consecration, if not the commission, of at least two other gigantic Viṣṇu images, I am now inclined to consider the magnificent Varāha to be a benefaction of his royal vision and devotion.

For some reason Varāha did not enjoy the same popularity as the Viṣṇu vikrānta theme. Only one other sculpture, on the bank of the Siddhapokhri in Bhadgaon (Fig. 95), portrays this heroic manifestation of Viṣṇu. Although considerably smaller than the Dhumvarahi Varāha and carved in relief, in the expression of power it is as impressive as the large sculpture. Iconographically it does not differ in any significant way from the Dhumvarahi Varāha, except that the left hand does not hold any emblem. As in the other example, the form here also is conceived in terms of rotund volumes. The waist is constricted by a sash which emphasizes the swelling belly, while the head rests directly on the torso without any suggestion of a neck. Perhaps, the most attractive part of the figure is the elegant hair-do with curls falling in ringlets over the shoulder.

Stylistically, the Bhadgaon Varāha seems closer to the Mathura Varāha of the fourth century (Fig. 93) than to the Dhumvarahi example (Fig. 92). Within Nepal, it displays the same vigour and sense of proportions as the Tilganga Viṣṇu vikrānta of A.D. 467 (Fig. 1). Especially noteworthy is the unwieldy manner in which the right foot is placed in total disregard to practicability but in keeping with a convention that appears at times in Kuṣāṇa sculpture. Although unnatural, to the viewer the posture imparts a greater sense of stability and strength which is what the sculptor attempted to achieve. A minor detail in which the sculptor has displayed his originality is in the disposition of the head. Generally, in such sculptures, as may be seen in the Dhumvarahi or Mathura examples, the head is turned upwards at an angle but here the head rests in a plane parallel to the ground, thereby creating even a greater impression of solidity. It seems beyond a doubt that the Bhadgaon Varāha, or a sculpture like it, must have served as the prototype for the more monumental Varāha at Dhumvarahi (Fig. 92).

Only one Vaiṣṇava bronze may be attributed with some certainty to the Licchavi period. It is a small but charming image in the Swali collection in Bombay (Fig. 96). That he is a dwarf brahmin is in no doubt and his divinity is proclaimed by the

son Viṣṇugupta wielded absolute power, and yet the *Vaṁśāvalī* does not mention Jiṣṇu at all, but arbitrarily assigns a reign of 45 years to Bhūmi. The evidence regarding Bhūmigupta's consecration of a Varāha image, therefore, seems unreliable. Simply by interposing the two lines, quoted above, the sculpture would become a dedication of Viṣṇugupta's munificence, which seems more likely.

aureole behind his head. With his right hand he holds a rosary and very likely he represents Vāmana, the Dwarf manifestation of Viṣṇu. The modelling is comparable to that seen in a splendid Kashmiri bronze of Cakrapuruṣa, now in Toronto, which is generally attributed to the seventh century.[1] Within Nepal the figure has the same grace and elegance as the dwarf personification of the thunderbolt in the Dhvaka baha Vajrapāṇi (Fig. 14).

The only other heroic image of any significance is that of Narasiṁha at Changu (Fig. 97). In this *avatāra* Viṣṇu manifested himself in a hybrid form—half man and half lion—in order to save his ardent devotee Prahlāda who was persecuted by his father Hiraṇyakaśipu for his devotion to Viṣṇu. Although the incident is represented with considerable gusto, once again we notice the overbearing emphasis on rigid frontality and hieratic symmetry that becomes increasingly apparent in the sculptures of the Ṭhākuri period. It may be pointed out that in one of Aṁśuvarman's inscriptions he is said to have made a grant to a temple of Narasiṁha. While this temple no longer exists, it is very likely that the Changu relief of Narasiṁha is as close a copy of the seventh century icon as the Pharphing Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 4) is of the fifth century reliefs (Figs. 1, 2).

The greater part of the stele is occupied by the two major combatants, Narasiṁha and Hiraṇyakaśipu, who appear to be the only active figures. All the others are portrayed as indifferent spectators who do not even seemingly care to watch the combat. In this respect the relief not only is without the tension and drama that we witness in the narrative reliefs of the Licchavi period, but also lacks the vitality that is apparent in the Changu image of Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 3). It is possible that the sculptor has intentionally underplayed the subsidiary figures in order to focus the viewer's attention completely on the pair engaged in mortal combat. There is no doubt that the two inter-locked figures are delineated in a very theatrical fashion and the awkwardness of Hiraṇyakaśipu's left arm seems to suggest that the sculptor did not quite know what to do with it.

Despite the organized composition of the Changu Viṣṇu vikrānta relief (Fig. 3), the majority of the figures are actively involved in the dramatic event. But in the Narasiṁha relief they form an unconcerned audience and are represented in a formal and hieratic fashion. As a matter of fact the only active figure is that of Hiraṇyakaśipu and the composition would have been altogether static but for the interlocked pairs of legs. The closest stylistic parallel to this relief is the Pharphing Viṣṇu vikrānta stele (Fig. 4) where we find the same static quality in the disposition of the figures.

[1] *Master Bronzes of India*, Chicago, 1965, Fig. 13.

Moreover, both sculptors seem to have employed identical canons of proportions as well as figurative types, as is apparent from a comparison of the figures of Garuḍa and Lakṣmī. Many other similarities are reflected in details such as the summarily incised patterns of the rocks and clouds, the design of Viṣṇu's crown in the Pharphing relief and the fallen crown of Hiraṇyakaśipu in the other (Fig. 97). These considerations lead me to suggest that these two reliefs are contemporary works, probably of the same atelier. If we then compare the two reliefs with the twelfth century image of Sūrya (Fig. 34), a date earlier than A.D. 1200 seems difficult to sustain.

III

The remaining monumental Vaiṣṇava sculptures represent the Garuḍa, the half bird, half human mount of Viṣṇu. The popularity of this creature in Nepali art is easily understood as it was customary to place his image in front of every Vaiṣṇava temple. Nepal, therefore, presents us with an amazing variety of Garuḍa, and over the centuries, the sculptors have revealed a similar breadth of imagination, as far as this figure is concerned, as did their counterparts in Indonesia.

Perhaps the most well known sculpture of Garuḍa in Nepal is that at Changu Narayan (Fig. 98). Among others, we will discuss here that at Makhan tole in Kathmandu (Figs. 99, 100), the example at Narayanhiti (Fig. 102), the one at Maru tole (Fig. 103), that at Harigaon (Fig. 101) and another in Hyu tole at Kathmandu (Fig. 104). Of these the Maru tole Garuḍa was dedicated in the year 1690 and that at Hyu tole in 1641. The Narayanhiti Garuḍa must predate King Pratāpamalla for we are told that he recovered this sculpture from Gyaneshvara along with the Kālīyadamana (Fig. 90), now within the Kathmandu palace.[1] The Harigaon Garuḍa stands on a pillar that bears an inscription of the Licchavi period so that *prima facie* it may be a work of the same time.

A brief comparison of the form of these Garuḍas clearly demonstrates the pitfalls in the method of determining the dates of sculptures by stylistic analysis. Looking at the Narayanhiti and Maru tole Garuḍas (Figs. 102, 103) it becomes virtually impossible not to agree as to their contemporaneity; and yet, they are not. If we then compare the Hyu tole Garuḍa of 1641 (Fig. 104) with the Makhan tole example (Fig. 99) the similarity is astonishing but perhaps less disturbing. It can easily be demonstrated that the Hyu tole Garuḍa is a modest attempt to copy the Makhan tole specimen. The differences between the Narayanhiti and Maru tole Garuḍa are

[1] See p. 66 note 3.

so slight, however, that one has to rely almost on one's intuitive knowledge to assert that the Narayanhiti Garuḍa is much the earlier of the two.

Both in the boldness of the aesthetic vision and in the execution of the formal concept the Narayanhiti Garuḍa appears to be a work of the Licchavi period. It is not insignificant that the sculpture was found along with the Kālīyadamana and the Palace Jalaśayana (Figs. 90, 89), which seems to be the image that was at Bhumbukkikā during Aṁśuvarman's time. It has also been convincingly demonstrated that the Kālīyadamana must be a sculpture of about the mid-seventh century. Thus, the Narayanhiti Garuḍa may conceivably be a sculpture of the Licchavi period, while the Maru tole example is a remarkably uncanny copy of 1690. It is obvious that the seventeenth century donor was so impressed by the Narayanhiti Garuḍa, recovered by Pratāpamalla, that he had almost an exact copy made.

On the assumption that it once graced the pillar on which the great Mānadeva's inscription of the year A.D. 464 is engraved, the Changu Garuḍa (Fig. 98) has been assigned to that date.[1] Apart from the fact that nothing in Mānadeva's panegyric records the commission of such an image, stylistically, it is inconceivable that the same atelier that was responsible for the Tilganga Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 1) relief also created this sculpture. They are products not only of totally different formal concepts, but also of different levels of technical proficiency. The Viṣṇu vikrānta relief, vigorous and vital as it is in its expression of the theme, hardly reveals the self-assurance in the handling of the material that is evident in the Changu Garuḍa. Nothing displays the sculptor's confident flair for style more elegantly than the serpent that adorns the Garuḍa's neck. Unlike the stylized delineation of serpent ornaments in other sculptures, here the reptile is rendered more naturalistically with the same liveliness and sensitivity that we find in the nāga below the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu (Fig. 12), in the Kālīyadamana sculpture (Fig. 90), or in the nāga adorning the neck of Garuḍa in the sixth century Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu from Bihar (Fig. 112).

What distinguishes the Garuḍas of the Licchavi period, such as those at Changu or Makhan tole, is their heroic quality. Like the Dhumvarahi Varāha (Fig. 92) or the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu (Fig. 12) they exude a sense of majestic grandeur and elemental vigour that one misses in the more whimsical Garuḍas of the later period, or even in the few giant Garuḍas of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The form is powerfully modelled with a chaste simplicity and natural elegance. In addition, both these Garuḍas have very individualistic faces unlike the more idealized physiognomy of the Narayanhiti Garuḍa (Fig. 102). The facial features of the Narayanhiti Garuḍa

[1] Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

with its aquiline nose, rather heavy sensuous lips, and large staring eyes, follow the classical norms as reflected in the Buddhanilkanth Viṣṇu (Fig. 12). The faces of the Changu and the Makhan tole Garuḍas (Figs. 98, 99), on the other hand, with their moustaches and less idealized features, appear more like portraits. Both faces, thus, with their aristocratic and imperious bearing and particularized features, may preserve the likenesses of royal benefactors who were devout Vaiṣṇavas.

Like the Changu and Makhan tole Garuḍas, the Harigaon figure (Fig. 101) is also portrayed completely as a human except for his wings which appear like a cape thrown across his shoulders. He also genuflects in an identical fashion with his hands joined in the gesture of adoration. It may be pointed out that the difference between such figures of Garuḍa and those of donors during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries (Figs. 105) is, indeed, very minor. Except for their stylistic differences and the fact that the Garuḍas have cape-like wings, the general configuration of all such figures is, as is also their placement before shrines, remarkably similar. And just as the Harigaon Garuḍa kneels on a rocky base above a lotus capital, so do the Malla kings kneel above similar pillars in front of their palaces or temples.

Compared to the Changu and Makhan tole sculptures, the form of the Harigaon Garuḍa is less overpowering in its voluminousness and the modelling more refined. Still, a sense of power and vitality evident in the others also characterizes the Harigaon example. The facial features, however, are more classically defined as in the Narayanhiti Garuḍa (Fig. 102), although the expression of the face is less impassive.

The astonishing persistence of a type, as well as of a style, in Nepal may be seen in a little bronze Garuḍa now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Fig. 106). In the essential details it continues the same type of figure that we have met with in the monumental Garuḍas. This diminutive figure must have once formed part of a larger group, as in the seventeenth century example now in the Prince of Wales Museum in Bombay (Fig. 48). Indeed, a comparison of the two figures will at once establish the remarkable similarities, both in modelling and in details. On the other hand, the Los Angeles Garuḍa may also be compared with that in the Changu relief (Fig. 117), dated by Kramrisch to the ninth century.[1] As we will presently see, the Changu Viṣṇu stele cannot really be dated earlier than the eleventh century. It may be pointed out that while the face, and especially the eyes of the Los Angeles Garuḍa, reveal a greater similarity with those of the Garuḍa in the Changu stele, the tiara on his head is more like that in the 1686 example.

[1] Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Unquestionably, therefore, both the seventh-ninth century date suggested for the Los Angeles Garuḍa by Kramrisch and the seventh-eighth century date given in the Boston catalogue can no longer be sustained.[1] A date closer to the seventeenth rather than the eighth would be more realistic. It must be stressed, however, that the 1686 Viṣṇu group may well imitate an earlier image with amazing fidelity. This is not only apparent if we compare it with other contemporary sculptures (Figs. 43, 44), but were it not inscribed, it may easily have been attributed to at least a century or two earlier when compared with the Cambridge repoussé covers (Fig. 41). Nonetheless, the Los Angeles Garuḍa remains a charming sculpture well expressing the soft lyrical qualities of the Malla period bronzes.

A far more imaginative and dramatic portrayal may be seen in another small gilt bronze in the Heeramaneck collection in New York (Fig. 107). It, too, must have formed part of a trinity such as that in the Prince of Wales Museum (Fig. 48), from which stylistically it is not far removed. Both Garuḍas share the same sort of modelling, similar proportions and almost identical details of jewelry and drapery. But otherwise the isolated Garuḍa is a unique sculpture, revealing a whimsical quality as expressive as that manifested by some of the finest Javanese studies of this mythical creature.

Standing with a determined outward thrust of his right hip, he emanates a sense of heroic grandeur and inherent vitality that is not always apparent in the more boyish Garuḍas of the Malla period. The surging volume of his torso gains added emphasis from the stylized design incised on his chest indicating, no doubt, hair. The tilt of the head away from the vertical axis gives him rather a haughty demeanour, not usually characteristic of Nepali Garuḍas, whose espression generally is one of soft submissiveness. The artist's delight in the exploitation of the design element is not only apparent in the whirling circles incised on the chest, but also in his delineation of the wings. The quality of fantasy is even further enchanced by the avian head rather than the usual human head that most Garuḍas in Nepal are given. In the final analysis, we are fully made aware that here we are confronted with the work of a highly imaginative artist and the continued vitality of the tradition during the Malla period.

In contrast to the heroic Garuḍas of the Licchavi period, those in the Changu Garuḍāsana relief (Fig. 109), the Zimmerman plaque of 1004 (Fig. 30) or the Deo Patan Garuḍāsana stele (Fig. 110) reveal a totally different concept. These are much

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 129; *The Art of India and Nepal: The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection*, Boston, 1966, p. 78.

more fanciful and imaginative than the giant though human Garuḍas of the Licchavi period. They all have somewhat cherubic faces, their heads covered with masses of curls and more prominent wings, but the lower parts of their bodies are completely avian. Obviously, these Garuḍas reflect a greater sense of whimsicality and inventiveness than the earlier examples, and increasingly, the emphasis is shifted from formal grandeur to decorative design.

IV

In general, the Vaiṣṇava sculptures of the Licchavi period, despite the fact that they were primarily images meant for worship, do not quite manifest the formal hieraticism that one associates with more conventional icons of the later period. Indeed, the emphatic frontality of Nepali sculpture was no doubt determined largely by its function as an image worshipped and viewed from the front. Nonetheless, some of the sculptures discussed so far reveal a strong narrative intent—found only in decorative reliefs of the later periods—and a greater concern for the psychological expression of a theme than its symbolic value. One form, however, that is manifestly hieratic and that was stereotyped probably in the Licchavi period is that of Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu in such images is portrayed riding on his mount Garuḍa.

The great popularity of the theme among the Vaiṣṇavas is attested to by a large number of versions which may be seen in the valley. Of the five examples of Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu discussed here, two are in situ in the temple compound at Changu (Figs. 109, 111), a third is in a shrine at Deo Patan (Fig. 110), a fourth is in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Fig. 108), and the fifth is in the collection of Jack Zimmerman (Fig. 30). The Zimmerman plaque has already been alluded to in an earlier chapter as it is a dated work of A.D. 1004.

In all the sculptures the god firmly straddles the Garuḍa's shoulders as the bird appears to fly through the air. The outstretched wings of the bird seem to form a comfortable shelter for his master, while the tail feathers spread behind the god as a heraldic aureole. Viṣṇu's attributes are distributed in the same manner as in the Jalaśayana image (Fig. 12), and in all these instances the god is most likely represented in his supreme or *para* aspect. That this perpetuates the form of the original image of the Changu temple is evident from the invocatory passage in Mānadeva's inscription on the pilar.[1] The divine figure, his expansive chest decorated with the auspicious *śrīvatsa* symbol, is said to roam the three worlds in order to protect

[1] Gnoli, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.

the devotees. Obviously, this explains why he is represented in these icons seated upon his flying mount. One of the earliest allusions to the Garuḍāsana image of Viṣṇu occurs in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*,[1] a Gupta period text, in which Garuḍa is said to hold the feet of the god in his two hands.

It is at once apparent that all five sculptures are modelled after the same prototype. Very likely the original icon within the temple of Changu was regarded with such sanctity that it continued to be copied through the centuries. Astonishing as their thematic integrity and compositional similarities are, the differences are equally palpable both in terms of iconography and style.

The only instance in which Garuḍa upholds his master's feet, as prescribed in the text, is in the Los Angeles sculpture (Fig. 108). In all the others, Garuḍa's hands are outstretched following the sweeping arcs of his wings. In three of the sculptures only Viṣṇu and Garuḍa are portrayed, but in the other two they are accompanied by the God's two wives, Śrī Lakṣmī and Bhū-devī (Figs. 30, 110). In the Zimmerman plaque the two goddesses sit gracefully on cushions placed on Garuḍa's outspread wings, while in the Deo Patan stele they stand in elegant *déhanchement* on either side. In the former the goddesses hold no attributes, but in the latter relief Lakṣmī grasps the stalk of a lotus with her left hand, while the right rests just below her breast with the palm turned towards her body. Bhū-devī holds a plate full of fruits and flowers emphasizing her fertility aspect.

Among the stylistic elements the most noteworthy are the astonishing differences in the treatment of the Garuḍa and his tail-feathers. These differences are manifest in the shape of the head, in the hair style, in the expression on the face, and in the ornamental patterns. The simplest and the most abstract pattern of the tail-feathers occurs in the Los Angeles example (Fig. 108), in which the feathers are like slender leaves. In the smaller Changu stele (Fig. 111) the feathers seem more like fish scales, in the gilt bronze plaque (Fig. 30), like peacock feathers, and in the two others (Figs. 109, 110) like exuberant scroll designs. In the larger Changu relief (Fig. 109) the design is even bolder and more flamboyant, almost like stylized clouds.

There are also perceptible differences in the manner in which Viṣṇu sits on the Garuḍa. In the Los Angeles sculpture his legs are wide apart and his feet upheld by Garuḍa's hands. In the two Changu images, as well as in the Zimmerman plaque, the

[1] Shah, *op. cit.*, 44, 9.
devadevaṁ tathā Viṣṇuṁ kārayedgaruḍasthitam / and
vadāsya bhagavānpṛṣṭhe chatrakumbhadharou karou /
na kartavyou tu kartavyou devapādadharāvubhou // 54, 5.

posture is almost identical except for the fact that in the smaller Changu relief the feet are placed behind Garuḍa's shoulders. In the Deo Patan example the posture is altogether different and Viṣṇu sits like a yogī with his legs folded in the lotus position.

There are many other differences in the details such as the design of the ornaments and the crowns. The crown of the smaller Changu figure is adorned with a floral design which is a variant of that in the Los Angeles Viṣṇu. In the other three the crown is distinguished by a grinning face of a lion or the *kīrttimukha*, which is defined more articulately in the larger Changu stele (Fig. 109). A significant stylistic difference between the Los Angeles sculpture and the others may be seen in the shape and form of the wheel. In the Los Angeles relief the wheel has an oval shape and a plain rim, while in the others the rim is laced with the flame motif. The rim of the wheel is also plain in the Bihar Viṣṇu of the sixth century (Fig. 112), as well as in the Lajimpat Viṣṇu vikrānta relief (Fig. 2). A further noteworthy difference in these sculptures occurs in the treatment of the nimbus. The Los Angeles example again has a simple halo, as in the Chapagaon Brahmā (Fig. 11); the smaller Changu relief has no nimbus at all; and in the three others the nimbus is adorned with the developed pearl and bead motif seen commonly in sculptures of the late Licchavi or Ṭhākurī period.

When compared with the Zimmerman plaque (Fig. 30), dedicated in A.D. 1004, it is somewhat easier to date the others. In terms of progressive elaboration unquestionably the most exuberant is the Deo Patan stele (Fig. 110). The shapes of the flame along the edge of the aureole are even more elaborate than those seen in the two eleventh century Patan Sūrya reliefs (Figs. 28, 29). In point of fact, the flames are as flamboyant as that seen in the Naksal Sūrya of the twelfth century (Fig. 34).

It is also manifestly clear that the Los Angeles Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu must be considered to be much earlier than the Zimmerman relief. As I have already pointed out, the image follows the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (ca. sixth century) more closely than the other sculptures. The slight awkwardness of Viṣṇu's posture and the spread of the legs are more reminiscent of the Hāritī sculptures (Figs. 58, 59) or of the Skubahi Umā-Maheśvara of A.D. 573 (Fig. 10). The design of the crown is similar to that seen in the crown of the Bhumara Yama of the Gupta period (Fig. 65). Other features shared by these two sculptures are the plain circular nimbus and the position of the lower right hand. It may be noted further that a similar treatment of the right hand is also noticeable in the Bihar Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu (Fig. 112), and both figures are somewhat similarly modelled and proportioned, although the Nepali example is more linear. One may also note the similarities in the designs of the dhoti and in the shapes of Garuḍas' faces. The Bihar Garuḍa has curls on his head that are of a variety

commonly seen in Gupta art of the fifth and sixth centuries. In the Nepali example, however, the artist has delineated Garuḍa's hair like that seen in Buddha images (Fig. 167). Thus, all these factors, considered together with the overall simplicity of the relief, lead me to suggest that the sculpture is a creation of the Licchavi period rather than the ninth century, as I have suggested elsewhere.[1]

The larger Changu Viṣṇu (Fig. 109) is certainly a later sculpture, although I believe it is somewhat earlier than the Zimmerman plaque of A.D. 1004. The greater simplicity of the form of Garuḍa, the prominence of the *kīrttimkha* in the crown, the manner in which the right hand is disposed (in the three others the hand distinctly shows the gesture of munificence), as well as a dynamic vitality that is lacking in the Zimmerman plaque, would indicate a date earlier than 1004 but later than that of the Los Angeles Viṣṇu. The smaller Changu Viṣṇu (Fig. 111), on the other hand, is probably a thirteenth century copy of the Los Angeles sculpture (Fig. 106).

V

One of the most impressive creations of an unknown master of the Ṭhākurī period is the relief at Changu, where Viṣṇu is portrayed in his universal manifestation (Fig. 113). I have elsewhere discussed its iconography at length along with comparative material from India.[2] Briefly, the figure of Viṣṇu, multi-headed and multi-armed, bestrides the three worlds like a colossus. The nāgas below represent the nether world, in the middle portion the four elephants symbolizing the four directions (*dik-gajas*) denote the terrestrial world, while in the upper section gods, sages, and asuras illustrate the heavens. There seems little doubt that the vivid description of Arjuna beholding Viṣṇu's universal form (*Viśvarūpadarśana*), as given in the *Bhagavadgītā*, must have inspired this amazing plastic version. In addition, the sculptor seems to have envisioned Viṣṇu as the cosmic Puruṣa as eulogized in the *Puruṣasūkta* of the *Ṛgveda*.[3] There we are ingenuously told that Puruṣa was responsible for creating the four castes, and, in the relief we see the brahmins emerging from his mouth, the kṣatriyas from his shoulders, the vaiśyas from his thighs and the śūdras from his knees.

[1] P. Pal, "Vaiṣṇava art from Nepal in the Museum", *Boston Museum Bulletin*, LXV, 340, 1967, p. 42.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 45ff., and Pal, *Vaiṣṇava Iconology in Nepal*, pp. 50ff.

[3] K. V. Soundararajan recently informed me that he has published this piece and has suggested its identification with Puruṣa, as described in the *Puruṣasūkta*. However, I have not seen the article yet, as it is not locally available.

No other sculpture in Nepal portrays the theme in so graphic a manner, and perhaps, its very complexity dissuaded artists of later generations from frequent attempts to copy it. Once again we are struck by the clarity of expression and the balanced spatial organization of the composition, characteristic of the Changu stele of Viṣṇu vikrānta or the Rockefeller Umā Maheśvara relief (Figs. 3, 133). In all three reliefs the figures of Viṣṇu and Śiva display the same proportions and modelling. The females are also treated in like manner, as are such details as the identical hair-style of the Earth goddess between Viṣṇu's feet and of Pārvatī in the Rockefeller relief. Many other details are likewise comparable, but even more remarkable is the naturalistic manner of delineating the animals in all three reliefs, although it is evident that the sculptors were more familiar with the elephant and the bull than the horse.

It seems indubitable, therefore, that the three reliefs belong together stylistically and must be considered to be earlier than the eleventh century Patan Sūryas (Figs. 28, 29). While a certain hardness as well as manneristic lassitude has overtaken the plasticity of the two dated Patan Sūryas, the modelling in the Viśvarūpa relief or the Changu Viṣṇu vikrānta has greater verve and vitality. The figures are more lively and freely rendered, while in the Patan Sūrya images they are considerably more stiff and formal. Although these reliefs, along with the Changu Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu (Fig. 109), continue to show an imaginative boldness in the composition and a greater narrative intent, characteristic of the Licchavi period, at the same time they share a hieratic quality and a tendency to ornateness not apparent in earlier sculptures. Thus, these steles must be attributed to a period between the Dhvaka baha caitya (Fig. 13) and the dated eleventh century sculptures, or in other words, to the ninth or tenth century.

Only two significant attempts seem to have been made by later sculptors to express the Viśvarūpa theme. The second attempt in stone is too fragmentary to merit a discussion here. The other, in bronze, is now in the Boston Museum, and portrays a simplified version of the elaborate subject (Fig. 114). Stylistically, it must be considered a near contemporary copy of the Changu Viśvarūpa (Fig. 113), so remarkable is the similarity between the principal figures, in the delineation of the sculptural mass as well as the salient details. The bronze version is less elaborate only because of the limitations of the material. A sculpture of powerful simplicity, it must predate the Zimmerman Viṣṇu of A.D. 1004; and a tenth century date would be in keeping with all the other formal features.

VI

The most conventional variety of Viṣṇu images, representing the god's supreme (*para*) aspect, may be seen in four examples illustrated here (Figs. 48, 116-118). In all such sculptures, the composition remained unchanged and was repeated for a period of at least seven hundred years. In each image the greater part of the stele is occupied by the figure of Viṣṇu, who stands as firm as a pillar on a pedestal decorated with exuberant vegetative motifs. To his right stands his consort Śrī-Lakṣmī on a lotus pedestal and to his left his mount Garuḍa on a rocky pedestal. Viṣṇu ubiquitously carries the discus, the lotus seed, the conch, and the mace in an identical fashion in all such figures. Lakṣmī, holding the lotus in her left hand, extends the right in the gesture of munificence, and simultaneously grasps a boss. Garuḍa has his hands joined in the attitude of reverence.

Not a single icon of this variety has come to light that may be attributed to the Licchavi period. But that this particular form of Viṣṇu was already well-established by the seventh century, is evident from the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu images of the period (Figs. 12, 89). Except for their supine positions, with the legs crossed at the ankles, there is little to distinguish between the basic form of Jalaśayana Viṣṇu and the main figure in the stereotyped images (Figs. 116-118). Moreover, that the same type of figure was employed to represent Harihara images, is evident from the Deo Patan stele (Fig. 52), which presumably retains the configuration of the sixth century original. Another impressive image of Harihara may still be seen in an unpretentious shrine at Saugal in Patan (Fig. 115). Despite its abraded condition, the massiveness of its form and the powerful modelling are reminiscent of the monumental Vaiṣṇava sculptures of the Licchavi period.

A similar sense of formal grandeur, although exhibiting a more plastic but taut modelling, is also apparent in the Naksal Viṣṇu (Fig. 116). Stylistically, it seems earlier than the Viṣṇu in the 1004 plaque (Fig. 30) which has gained considerably in linear accent. The sheer physical presence of the Naksal Viṣṇu, with its swelling thighs and chest, is more reminiscent of the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu (Fig. 12) rather than the dated sculptures of the eleventh century. If a ninth century date is acceptable for the Naksal Viṣṇu, it is clearly evident that the Changu stele (Fig. 117) must be a later sculpture. Altogether, its decoration is more exuberant, closer in fact to the surface fussiness seen on the eleventh century Mañjunātha (Fig. 33) or the Naksal Sūrya of 1189 (Fig. 34).

As a fully developed composition, complete with the two acolytes, the iconic type

is probably a creation of the artists of the Ṭhākurī period, and, with remarkable tenacity, it has survived well into the seventeenth century (Fig. 48). The only perceptible differences between the Naksal Viṣṇu (Fig. 116) and the Prince of Wales Museum example (Fig. 48) are in matters of details. In later examples we usually find both Lakṣmī and Garuḍa standing on lotuses (Fig. 118), a floral design replaces the *kīrttimukha* on the crown, and the ornamentation has increased considerably. Moreover, a carelessness becomes evident in the execution of details, particularly in stone, as is apparent if we compare the treatment of the meandering plant motif in the Naksal Viṣṇu (Fig. 116) and in that from Patan (Fig. 118). In bronze, however, details were more meticulously rendered even into the Malla period. The modelling, in general, is less assured in the later images, often even clumsy, and the figures appear more as products of a tired, though sustained, convention rather than as vital artistic creations.

This brings to a conclusion the discussion of Vaiṣṇava sculpture in the valley. From what has been said above, it is clear that, aesthetically, the most creative period of Vaiṣṇava art stretches from the fifth to the tenth century. Even from what remains today, it is evident that during this period artists were called upon to represent a wide variety of Vaiṣṇava themes, most of which are related to the heroic form of Viṣṇu. While many of these themes were based on Purāṇic literature composed in India, in general the Nepali sculptors reveal a distinct flair for originality, visible both in narrative representation and in dramatic expression.

Impressive as the Viṣṇu vikrānta reliefs (Figs. 1, 2) and the magnificent Varāha (Fig. 92) are, certainly the most outstanding expression of a Vaiṣṇava theme is found in the sculpture of Kālīyadamana (Fig. 90). Nothing comparable is known from India, and it must be regarded as the *pièce de resistance* of early Nepali sculpture. Equally exciting is the Changu image of Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, and, both in the visualization of the subject and in the clarity of expression, it bears the impress of the hands of a master.

After the tenth century, while the style begins to show signs of exhaustion, at least as far as Vaiṣṇava sculptures are concerned, hieratic icons increasingly replace those portraying heroic themes. The most favoured iconographic formula, that of Viṣṇu accompanied by Śrī-Lakṣmī and Garuḍa, was now firmly established and continued to persist throughout the Malla period. The other popular iconic form, perhaps devised during the Licchavi period, was that of Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu, and this too was copied endlessly during subsequent epochs.

The creative talent of the artists of the Malla period seems to be better reflected in

Vaiṣṇava paintings, which are beyond the scope of this work, and in the wooden struts (Figs. 119, 120) that decorate the many temples raised in the valley after the sixteenth century. While the basic forms are traditional, the struts reveal the Newari sculptor's remarkable dexterity in wood carving and his innate flair for decorativenes.

This penchant for lively decoration is already reflected in the Changu Garuḍāsana image and continues to express itself, though with restraint, throughout the Ṭhākurī period. It blossoms forth exuberantly and with renewed vigour in the Malla period, especially during the time of the Three Kingdoms. Luxuriantly swaying figures, exuberant ornamentation, and rich floral scrolls overwhelm the surfaces of the temple walls or supporting struts. In addition, the artists seem to have found a new delight in tāntric forms which, not only enriched their repertoire, but also presented them with fesh aesthetic challenges and a new outlet for their creative impulse. But the cult of Viṣṇu had less to do with tāntrism than the others, and Vaiṣṇava sculpture gained little from the appearance of new ideas.

CHAPTER FOUR

ŚAIVA SCULPTURE

A. MUKHALIṄGA

I

Paśupatinātha is the god *par excellence* in Nepal and the Pāśupata sect has remained predominant in the country. The Pāśupatas believe that Śiva has two forms: *niṣkala* and *sakala*.[1] *Niṣkala* is his abstract form and is symbolized by the liṅga or the phallus. This is the form of Śiva that is universally recommended for installation within the sanctum. The *sakala* image, when Śiva is shown in anthropomorphic form, is recommended for external use on the walls and niches of a temple. No doubt this is why liṅgas in Nepal far outnumber the embodied representations of Śiva. While a large number of liṅgas are abstract symbols, others have one or four heads carved on the shafts in prominent relief, and these are known as "mukhaliṅga".

The temple of Paśupatinātha is perhaps the oldest existing Śaiva shrine in the country. Within the temple is a giant mukhaliṅga with four impressive heads. Although a work only of the fourteenth century—the earlier image having been destroyed by the invading Muslims in the previous century—it must be a close imitation of the original, for the faces are still reminiscent of the early Licchavi style, as may be seen in a neglected example in the same area (Fig. 121).

Without question this *ekamukhaliṅga* is one of the finest sculptures of the Licchavi period.[2] It also appears to be as close a copy of a Gupta sculpture as we are likely to encounter in Nepal. Even a cursory comparison with the beautiful ekamukhaliṅga from Khoh establishes their close stylistic relationship (Fig. 122). The Khoh liṅga is probably a work of the late fifth century and reflects all the typical traits of the high Gupta style. The Nepali example could hardly be far removed from it chronologically.

Indeed, so remarkably Indian is the Mrigasthali ekamukhaliṅga and so different is its feeling from other Nepali sculptures of the fifth or the sixth century, that one

[1] J. L. Shastri (ed.), *Śiva Purāṇa*, New Delhi, 1970, I, p. 50.
[2] For a full view of the liṅga see, Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 174.

wonders whether it is not altogether a work by an Indian sculptor. It is not improbable that Indian sculptors were at times actually present in Nepal, although apart from this liṅga and the stray Mathura head of the Gupta period (Fig. 83), no other sculpture is so blatantly Indian.

Both the Khoh and the Nepali liṅgas epitomize the characteristics of the high Gupta style. The articulate definition of the facial features—particularly the loti-form eyes, the aquiline nose, the thick, pouting underlip, the noble profile, the simple and elegant hair-style—together with the serene expression of the face, as beffitting an ideal yogī, are highlights of the Gupta style. The face is a perfect oval and every feature delineated with mathematical exactitude. Although the face is human, there is something suprahuman in the beatific expression of innate calm and compassion. A supremely elegant sculpture, if the liṅga (Fig. 121) is a work by a Nepali master, it clearly demonstrates how well the local artists had assimilated not only the formal elements of the Gupta style but also the essential aesthetic vision that created it.

An idea of the original liṅga in the Paśupatinātha temple may be gleaned from a bronze now at Detroit (Fig. 123). The powerfully modelled heads and the noble visages with their distinctive aquiline noses possess an austere grandeur that was the hall mark of the art of the Licchavi period. Mukhaliṅgas with four faces had become rather common in India by the Gupta period, and the faces are usually taken to represent four basic aspects of Śiva—Aghora, Tatpuruṣa, Sadyojāta and Vāmadeva, the Īśāna aspect remaining invisible. According to the Pāśupatas the five faces symbolize the five elements, thereby indicating that Śiva personifies the entire universe. An additional characteristic of the Nepali mukhaliṅgas, as seen in the Detroit example, is the inclusion of the hands below each head in such a manner as to make the representations into busts rather than faces. The hands almost ubiquitously hold a waterpot and a rosary, both appropriate attributes of Śiva, the great yogī, and both emblems are prescribed for his Mahādeva aspect in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*.[1] The terrifying face on the Detroit liṅga no doubt symbolizes the Aghora or Bhairava nature of the god. It may be mentioned that in later liṅgas the Bhairava face is hardly distinguishable from the others.

A somewhat unusual variety of the mukhaliṅga is that standing near the temple of Paśupatinātha on the bank of the river Bagmati (Fig. 124). Here, none of the faces has a terrifying expression and two of the heads are covered with short curls, as we see usually in Buddha images. A slightly different form of curls also occurs on the head of Aghora in the Detroit liṅga (Fig. 123), although in the Indian tradition only

[1] Shah, *op. cit.*, ch. 48, 9.

Lakulīśa is given the iconographic features—such as the short curls and the gesture of turning the wheel of the Law—of the Buddha. Because of the preponderance of the Pāśupata cult in Nepal, it would not be surprising to find one of the faces on a mukhaliṅga representing Lakulīśa, the reformer of the sect. But it is quite clear that in the damaged example on the bank of the Bagmati (Fig. 124), two of the heads have curly hair. Since neither of the faces has an awesome expression, an identification with Aghora seems improbable; and I can only suggest that this unique liṅga once again reflects a syncretic attitude that is typical of Nepal. I have elsewhere discussed how Śiva and Buddha came to be almost identified in the country, and possibly, here we see an ostensible symbol of that identity.[1] At any rate, we are left in no doubt that the Nepalis not only applied an iconographic tradition that was different from India, but often also created such unique types to suit their own specific religious needs.

A further peculiarity of one of the faces of this liṅga (Fig. 124) is the fact that the left half appears to represent a female. This is indicated by the more elaborate coiffure and the extended left ear bearing a floral stud. That one of the four faces in many such mukhaliṅgas is divided into a male and a female half is further corroborated by a particularly beautiful example in the compound of Jung Bahadur's temple (Fig. 125). Its northern face is clearly divided into two halves, the right half representing a female and the left a male. No doubt here we have an attempt to portray the androgynous form of Śiva and Pārvatī, known as Arddhanārīśvara. Once again this appears to be an iconographic variation peculiar to Nepal, and among several other examples, that known as Tāmreśvara in Deo Patan is perhaps the finest.

The sculptor has indicated the difference between the two halves of the head by rather subtle means. The hair on the right is gathered up into an elegant bun as is seen in feminine coiffures of the Ṭhākurī period. On the left half is a simpler *jaṭā* of the type normally visible on Śiva's head. The hairline on the temple varies slightly in the two portions, a wider strand of pearls decorating the right half. In addition, this difference is further emphasized by the different gesture of the right hand. On three sides the right hand, raised in the gesture of reassurance, clasps the rosary, but that of the northern bust makes a graceful feminine gesture as it holds a flower.

The idea of carving one of the faces as androgynous is not altogether unusual, but what is peculiar is the fact that the right half of the face is female. Generally females are placed on the left (*vāma*) of a god, which is why the word *vāmā* is a synonym for

[2] P. Pal, "A Note on the Ancient Shrine of Pashupatinath, Nepal", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, New Delhi, 1961, pp. 93ff.

woman. But in other instances in Nepal as well, such as in Viṣṇu reliefs (Figs. 4, 116), the female consort is placed on the right of the god. One other peculiarity about this particular mukhaliṅga is that one of the other heads wears a crown that is usually given to Viṣṇu. The crown is even complete with the grinning face of glory adorning the central medallion, but apart from this variation, it remains essentially a bust of Śiva.

In the *Viṣṇudharmottara*[1] the northern face of a four-headed liṅga is referred to as Umāvaktra, and we are told further that the Umā face represents water. Curiously the *Vāmana Purāṇa*[2] informs us that wherever there is a liṅga of Śiva, Umā resides beside it also in the form of a liṅga. Perhaps, this is why the northern face of these liṅgas in Nepal has been represented as androgynous, thereby not only indicating the constant presence of Umā, but also emphasizing the non-duality of divine nature.

Of the several examples of mukhaliṅga discussed here, only the Eilenberg bronze (Fig. 32) is dated, although a date around A.D. 500 for the ekamukhaliṅga (Fig. 121) seems irrefutable. The Detroit Śiva-liṅga would appear to be earlier than the Eilenberg sculpture, for the profile of its faces is much closer to that seen in the liṅga of the Licchavi period. However, it is evident that while the nose is still aquiline in the Detroit bronze, the underlip has lost its fullness and sensuous quality. In contrast, the other lithic examples have rounder faces with shorter and thicker noses as well as more swollen cheeks, thereby revealing a stronger ethnic difference. The wayside liṅga (Figs. 124) is stylistically similar to the Changu Viṣṇu vikrānta (Fig. 4) or the Viśvarūpa relief (Fig. 113), both of which I have assigned to the ninth century. The example in the temple of Jung Bahadur (Fig. 125) is perhaps not far removed from the Eilenberg bronze of A.D. 1040. The increased ornamentation, as seen in rows of necklaces and the floral bands around the middle and the bases of the liṅgas, leads me to suggest a later date for the Harigaon and the Deo Patan examples (Figs. 126, 127). While the Harigaon liṅga may be assigned to the twelfth century, the Deo Patan sculpture would appear to be a later copy—perhaps of the Malla period—revealing, however, the not uncommon but astonishing persistence of stylistic features of an earlier age.

[1] Shah, *op. cit.*, ch. 48, 6.
umāvaktram ca vijñeyam tasya devasaya cottaram / 6a
. . . . . *umeyaṁ cāpa ucyate* / 8a

[2] *Vāmana Purāṇa*, 46, 19-20.
asti yatsannidhou liṅgaṁ devadevasya śūlinah //
umā sa liṅgarūpeṇa harapārśve na muñcati /

B. UMĀ - MAHEŚVARA

II

Apart from the liṅga, the most important and popular Śaiva theme in Nepali art is that known in iconographic texts as Umā-Maheśvara. In an earlier chapter, I have already discussed the few dated reliefs representing this theme. The subject seems to have enjoyed a long history beginning at least from the sixth century, if not earlier. Over the centuries the form also underwent a long process of evolution that seems to establish the following general art historical principles. The earlier the representation is the simpler the iconography and the composition. Secondly, as the complexity of the iconography increased, so did the pattern of ornamental elaborations. Thirdly, once the iconic type in its full regalia was well-established, in subsequent examples the changes were effected mostly in minutiae of details. And finally, although the sculptors were generally limited by iconographic injunctions, even a sanctified model was never copied in an identical manner. A discussion of a diverse group of sculptures portraying the Umā-Maheśvara theme and a comparison with select Indian examples will establish the validity of the above principles.

The Siku bahi image of A.D. 567 (Fig. 9) is the earliest dated example of such reliefs. As it now stands it seems to consist only of two figures, those of Umā and Maheśvara, who is given two arms rather than four. A second sculpture, preserved in a somewhat indifferent condition near Sankhamul temple at Patan, is possibly an earlier example.[1] Both figures in this relief reveal a heaviness in the modelling, as well as a coarseness in the treatment of details, that relates them to the early Hāritī images. When compared with the Siku bahi stele, the Sankhamul sculpture must be assigned to the early part of the fifth century, when the impact of the Gupta style was not yet strongly felt in Nepal.

A third fragmentary sculpture representing Umā-Maheśvara now stands in the Archaeological Garden at Patan (Fig. 128). Of the two hands of the god, the right hand is raised in the gesture of assurance, and the left, with its fist closed (the attribute is unrecognizable), rests against the left thigh. Umā's right arm embraces the god's shoulder, while the left seems to hold the end of her drapery, which flows over the arm. Below her left hand is a piece of furniture of an hourglass shape and with hatchings imitating wickerwork. Śiva wears a dhoti indicated by parallel

[1] For an illustration of the Sankhamul sculpture, see N. R. Banerjee, "A note on the iconography of Uma-Mahesvara in Nepal" in *Ancient Nepal*, 1 (1967), pl. IX B.

incisions under which there is slight evidence of a swelling penis. Behind him and to his right one can discern the throat, the ear and the hump of what must have been a gigantic bull. The elegant turn of Umā's head and the gesture of Śiva's right hand clearly reflect the intimacy of the situation. That the relief was an image to be worshipped and was fixed to a base (*jalahāri*) is evident from its lower part. It is quite clear that, stylistically, the sculpture is closely related to that at Sikubahi, and both may well be works of the same atelier. Although the Sikubahi image is badly mutilated, it may be safely observed that, by contrast, both in the modelling and the disposition of the figures, the specimen in the Archaeological Garden is a more sophisticated version. In fact, the difference is analogous to that between the delineation of the amorous couple on the Badami pillar of A.D. 578 (Fig. 11) and that of Śiva and Pārvatī in an Ellora panel, which may belong to the early seventh century (Fig. 140). The astonishingly similar configuration of the main couple in all these reliefs reveals how a stereotyped schema survived with remarkable tenacity in widely different areas and times. This 'classic' composition of an amorous couple was popular with artists in early India (Fig. 139) and is also often represented in terracotta plaques. Such plaques were easily transportable and must have resulted in the wide diffusion of the motif.

A unique relief at Mrigasthali (Fig. 129) reveals a totally different composition and formal concept. The affectionate intimacy and the sensuous grace of the other couples are replaced here by hieratic frontality and monumental grandeur—perhaps a lingering memory of the early Licchavi tradition. As in the Ellora panel (Fig. 140), the figures are distributed on several planes, thereby creating a more convincing optical veracity as well as manifesting the sculptor's complete self-assurance in the handling of the material. The modelling of the principal figures has a distinctive quality; a sense of swelling volume, imbued with ponderous grace, characterizes the rather heavily proportioned figures, as if the artist wanted to convey a feeling for immense physical power and energy. Equally impressive is the figure of the bull, Nandi, who is portrayed with masterly skill and shows how well the sculptor understood the animal's powerful form and quiet majesty.

Iconologically, as well as compositionally, the relief anticipates the more complex steles of the Ṭhākurī period, although in all later reliefs Umā is portrayed in the more naturalistic mode witnessed in the two other steles (Figs. 9, 128). Śiva is here given four arms but only two attributes: the invariable *mātuluṅga*, symbolizing the seed of the universe, and the trident. Kārttikeya, the younger son of the couple, sits firmly near his father's leg, and his resolute posture is strongly reminiscent of the

sixth century portrait sculpture (Fig. 64). The two attendants of Śiva peer out of their rocky ramparts and seem to have only two arms each, as in the Ellora panel (Fig. 140). Their crowns are of the same type that adorns the head of Kālīya (Fig. 90), and only three gaṇas, depicted below the rocky seat, are engaged in entertaining the divine couple. Interestingly, however, Gaṇeśa, who leads the gaṇas in the majority of the reliefs, is conspicuous by his absence here. Although the formal concept in the relief is considerably different from that in the Sikubahi fragment (Fig. 9), a seventh century date seems to be warranted by the comparisons cited above.

Of the other reliefs which display the simple iconography and composition of the Licchavi steles, that at Sankhu (Fig. 130) deserves some attention. As the upper portion is broken we are unable to determine whether there were any figures in this part of the sculpture; but certainly the gaṇas are excluded from the base. Umā is given a female attendant; the impressive Nandi behind Śiva has a prominent hump; and Kārttikeya sits in *lalitāsana* beside his fathers' right leg.

In terms of compositional simplicity the Sankhu relief is not unlike the Mrigasthali stele (Fig. 129), although the rock formation shows greater stylization. Here also Śiva is given four arms, one of which curiously holds a flower against his chest. It may generally be admitted that compared to the Kwa bahal Umā-Maheśvara relief of 987 (Fig. 27), the Sankhu stele is less elaborate and the figures far more classically modelled. The figure of Kārttikeya is remarkably close to that of Kṛṣṇa in the Kālīyadamana sculpture (Fig. 90) or to those of the children in the Patan Hāritī (Fig. 60), both of the seventh century. There are also other areas of resemblance between the Sankhu Umā-Maheśvara and the Kālīyadamana, particularly noticeable in the modelling of the figures of Kālīya and Śiva, in the pattern of the ear ornaments and the general shape and design of the crowns. Moreover, the figures of the Sankhu Umā and the Patan Hāritī are very similarly modelled, and the rock design is identical in both steles. A late seventh or early eighth century date for the Sankhu sculpture, therefore, seems a reasonable assumption.

III

A more elaborate version at Chuping ghat in Bhadgaon (Fig. 131) introduces us to a more hieratic representation. Among the additions in this relief are: the river-goddess, Gaṅgā, to the right of Śiva's head; a balancing flying celestial figure on the other side; and between the two an umbrella proclaiming Śiva's majesty. Umā's attandant is now given four arms and Kārttikeya has a companion to his right. The

lower portion of the stele is embedded in the ground so that we are not certain whether the gaṇas are represented.

Virtually all the other Umā-Maheśvara reliefs (Figs. 132-136) are further elaborations of the Chuping ghat stele and all have certain characteristics in common. The composition in each stele is divided into three horizontal zones. In the lower register is a band of performing gaṇas, while the middle portion is dominated by the larger figures of Umā and Maheśvara with their attendants. In the upper section are the guardians (*pratihāras*), Gaṅgā and celestial beings. Moreover, in all the steles the locale, which is mount Kailāsa, is indicated by the stereotyped design of rockery, although the exact manner of representing the rocks as well as the disposition of the figures differs considerably from one relief to another.

If we compare these steles with those assigned to the Licchavi period, we are at once struck by two basic differences. The composition of these reliefs is characterized by greater schematization and frontality, while the increase in the number of figures imparts to them a crowded effect. Apart from the greater number of gaṇas in the lower section Umā now has two or more attendants. While in some (Figs. 134-136) the leader of the gaṇas is Gaṇapati, shown in the middle, in others it is Vīrabhadra. At times Kārttikeya is shown alone, but often he is given a companion. Only in the Ullman relief (Fig. 134) neither Gaṅgā nor the apsaras is shown at the top, but in all the others both are included along with the solar and lunar symbols. It may be pointed out that Śiva is always shown as ithyphallic and has only two guardians, each with four arms.

Even more elaborate are the dated reliefs of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, one of which is illustrated here (Fig. 38). The number of gaṇas and attendants, both divine and celestial, have increased considerably, and in addition, the sculptor has included a few yogīs seated in meditation within rocky caves. As a rule also Gaṇeśa now leads the dancing gaṇas. The physiognomy of the figures is distinctive of the Malla period—plump with high foreheads, rather snub features and angular, slit eyes. The females are less sumptuously modelled and have certainly lost the sensuous elegance of the figures seen in the 987 relief (Fig. 27). It can thus be quite readily accepted that the less elaborate group of steles is earlier than the Harigaon Umā-Maheśvara relief of A.D. 1414.

A glance at all the steles (Figs. 132-136) reveals their astonishing similarities as well as their interesting divergences. In general, they all seem to be more elaborate versions of the Mrigasthali or the Sankhu reliefs (Figs. 129, 130). From the former are derived the attendant figures, while the manner of the disposition of the two

principal figures stems from the latter. There can be little doubt that basically the sculptors must have followed the same iconographic tradition, which may well be that of the *Matsya Purāṇa*, as we shall see shortly. But the differences that are not of an iconological nature must be attributed to an attempt on the part of the artist to deviate intentionally. For example, while all the others portrayed the gaṇas as dancing, the sculptor of the Ullmann stele (Fig. 134) chose to give us a more static version. Or again, some of the artists are more expressive than the others in emphasizing the landscape by delineating the rocks with greater exuberance. In the Rockefeller relief (Fig. 133) Kārttikeya is shown riding his father's bull, while the gaṇas are being led by Vīrabhadra rather than Gaṇeśa. Vīrabhadra also leads the gaṇas in another stele (Fig. 132), but in all the others Gaṇeśa occupies the centre and is the undisputed leader. The number of Umā's attendants vary from one image to another, but one of them invariably attends to her feet. Finally, only the Rockefeller and Ullmann reliefs are not provided with a parasol at the summit.

IV

In the standard Indian iconographic works such as the *Aparājitapṛcchā* or the *Rūpamaṇḍana* we are given the following description of the Umā-Maheśvara theme.[1] Umā should be seated with Śaṅkara (Maheśvara), who has four arms. In his two right hands are the *mātuluṅga* and the trident; one of his left hands holds the snake, while the fourth embraces Umā. Umā's right hand is gently placed on Śiva's shoulder and her left hand bears the mirror. Below them should be shown Nandi, Kumāra, Gaṇeśa and the emaciated but dancing Bhṛṅgī. A glance at the reliefs will make it apparent that the Nepali depictions are even more elaborate than such textual descriptions. Besides, there are significant differences in the attributes of Śiva from one relief to another, although in most the rosary and the trident appear in the two upper hands. In no instance does Śiva grasp the snake but the *mātuluṅga* is fairly common. In one or two steles he holds a lotus of dalliance (*līkākamala*); and while one of his left hands invariably embraces Umā in one fashion or another, only in two examples (Figs. 135, 136) does the hand cup her breast. Thus, though there are such variations in Śiva's attributes, the sculptors seem to show a greater consistency in those of Umā. Her left hand ubiquitously holds a flower, while the right rests on the thigh of her lord as she reclines against him. Only in the Mrigasthali and the Rockefeller reliefs (Figs. 129, 133) is her right hand raised against the breasts and seems to hold a nosegay.

[1] B. Srivastava (ed.), *Rūpamaṇḍana*, Varanasi, V.S. 2021, pp. 159-60.

Among the accessory figures, Kārttikeya, in one form or another, is included in every instance except the two sixteenth century bronzes (Figs. 137, 138). The gaṇas are also present in varying numbers in all the reliefs, and, save for a few instances, both Śiva and Umā are given two attendants each. Nandi is shown in every stele, but nowhere is Umā given her lion mount. Among the gaṇas of Śiva, the emaciated Bhṛṅgī is present in all the reliefs.

While the above comparison clearly demonstrates the inventiveness of each artist, which is also manifest in such stylistic divergences as the posture of Umā, the disposition of the figures or details of ornaments, it also establishes that the Nepali sculptors followed an iconographic tradition different from that recorded in such texts as the *Rūpamaṇḍana* or the *Aparājitapṛcchā*. It should also be stressed that the Umā-Maheśvara theme represents the ideal domestic situation which is not apparent in myths associated with other divinities. Umā and Maheśvara with their children form a delightful family group, and Indian literature has exploited this situation frequently and with great success. Just as Viṣṇu has remained the symbol of martial heroism, Umā and Maheśvara emphasize domestic bliss.

One of the most elaborate descriptions of the Umā-Maheśvara theme occurs in the *Matsya Purāṇa*,[1] which must have been redacted well before A.D. 800. We are told that in Umā-Mahesvara images Śiva should be shown either with two or four arms. His right hands should hold the lotus and the trident; and while one left hand should rest on Umā's shoulder, the other should fondle her breast. The beautifully decorated Umā should be gazing at her lord fondly, and a mirror and a lotus should be placed on her left. She should be accompanied by Jayā and Vijayā, her principal attendants, and by Kumāra and Gaṇeśa. Near the gateway should stand the guhyakas (gaṇas), while above, *vidyādharas* and nymphs should be playing musical instruments.

It will at once be apparent that this Purāṇic account is much closer to the Nepali images than the stereotyped iconographic descriptions. The *Purāṇa* further tells us that the situation is charming and pleasant, and Umā should be carressing the left side of the god, thereby emphasizing that the scene is one of conjugal harmony. Specifically, we notice that at least in the Sankhu relief (Fig. 130) Śiva holds a flower, and in most steles Umā has two companions. There is no mention in the text, however, of Śiva's *pratihāras* or attendants.

The narrative intent in the *Matsya Purāṇa* description, as also in the Nepali reliefs, is quite explicit. Elsewhere in the *Purāṇa* we are told that after their marriage, Śiva brought Umā to Kailāsa, and, one day, while they were playing dice, she was

[1] *The Matsya Purāṇam*, II, pp. 307-08.

distracted by a general uproar. On looking out of their mansion, she saw the gaṇas cavorting around and dancing. "Some of them were lean, others corpulent, some tall, others short with big stomachs, with their faces like those of tigers, lions, and elephants. Some of them were like sheep and goats . . . Some were dressed in the Kusa fibre and skins; some naked and some of deformed appearance . . . They were armed with various kinds of divine weapons, wearing various kinds of divine ornaments of flowers and serpents, endowed with various kavachas (amulets) pervaders in the heaven, players on the Vina, dancers at many places."[1] One need hardly stress the astonishing similarity between this description of the gaṇas and their representation in the reliefs.

In the text the gaṇas are often referred to as gaṇeśvaras and there is no mention at all of Gaṇeśa. It is obvious that the elephant-headed gaṇa, described in the literature, was easily confounded with Gaṇeśa, and indeed the description further adds that some of the gaṇas have many heads and arms. One of the gaṇas who catches Umā's fancy is Vīraka or Vīrabhadra who is described by Śiva as his favourite and one for whom all the others bear great respect. Elsewhere he is characterized as the lord of the gaṇeśvaras and as one who became the "real son of the Devi on some future occasion" Presumably, he is reborn as Kārttikeya, although, for the present, he is adopted by Umā who begins to dote on him. It is therefore quite evident that the leader of the gaṇas in at least three reliefs (Figs. 129, 132, 133) is none other than Vīrabhadra, while Kārttikeya is shown as a different personality riding his father's bull, although here again the artist has captured some of the playfulness that is ascribed in the *Matsya Purāṇa* to Vīrabhadra.

V

Generally, the stereotyped versions of the Umā-Maheśvara theme, as can be seen in the medieval art of India, rarely reflects the narrative intent that we find in the *Matsya Purāṇa* description. In typical steles from Central India, although both Kumāra and Gaṇeśa are included, the dancing gaṇas are not always represented. In the eastern Indian version, particularly in Bengal, a greater intimacy is displayed between the two principal figures, and Śiva often fondly touches Umā's chin. It is quite clear, however, that the Nepali sculptors did not adopt these versions at all; rather we must turn to Ellora to find the closest parallels.

The majority of the Ellora panels representing the Umā-Maheśvara theme reflect

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 104-05.

the sportiveness apparent in the *Matsya Purāṇa* description. As in the Nepali reliefs, there also Śiva and Umā are shown in their mountain abode surrounded by their attendants, including the *pratihāras* of Śiva, Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya and cavorting gaṇas. In one charming panel (Fig. 140) the sculptors have brilliantly captured a particularly felicitous occasion after their marriage when Śiva lost his favourite Nandi to Umā in a game of dice. In the lower section of the relief the gaṇas are leading the helpless animal to Umā. We are reminded of the charming verse composed by a Sanskrit poet, Abhinanda:[1]

> "Let go his horn, Bhṛṅgin,
> and Gaṇeśa, drop his tail.
> Ah, but you are sad, Nandin!
> Poor Mahākāla! Clasp not his neck."
> With such words being led to the feet of Pārvatī
> may the bull with turning neck dewlap swaying,
> Still looking at his three-eyed master who has lost at dice,
> bring you to happiness.

Almost consistently the Nepali sculptors have shown their preference for delineating Umā stretched out partially, and at times, reclining against Śiva. This is a mode that also was popular at Ellora, particularly in the scenes where Rāvaṇa is shaking mount Kailāsa, but in Nepal it was already employed in the sixth century Siku bahi relief (Fig. 9). This particular disposition of the couple, either reflecting fear on the part of Umā or simple intimacy, was no doubt borrowed from an already established convention for portraying love scenes (*mithuna*), as seen in a Pitalkhora relief (Fig. 139) or at Sanchi,[2] where even the rocks are delineated in the same geometric manner as at Ellora or in the Nepali reliefs. Perhaps, during the Kuṣāṇa-Gupta period, when the Umā-Maheśvara representation was stereotyped in India, the sculptors merely adopted the established formula for the *mithuna* in a religious context. In the medieval Indian steles the narrative intent was replaced by a sense of hieraticism, but the Nepali sculptors, by continuing to include the gaṇas, adhered to an image-type that is quite distinct from the Indian versions. The Nepali interpretations seem to be based essentially on more animated descriptions, such as that quoted earlier from the *Matsya Purāṇa*.

[1] H. D. Ingalls, *An Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1965, p. 88.
[2] S. Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, (3rd ed.), London, 1965, Fig. 21.

VI

If the date of the Kwa bahal relief is accepted as A.D. 987, the Rockefeller and the Pashupatinath steles (Figs. 132, 133) must be considered as earlier. Not only are the forms in the Kwa bahal relief more static but also the composition shows a stronger hieratic quality. Both the Rockefeller and the Pashupatinath steles are informed with greater vitality and natural grace. This is particularly evident in the treatment of Umā who displays a sense of easy and relaxed poise not apparent in the Kwa bahal sculpture. Moreover, the gaṇas are portrayed in a far livelier fashion in both steles, and Vīrabhadra is their leader rather than Gaṇeśa, shown invariably as the leader in all the other reliefs. It may be recalled that it is Vīrabhadra who occupies the centre of the Mrigasthali stele of the seventh century, and Gaṇeśa is not represented at all (Fig. 129).

The attendants of Śiva are by far the most elegant in the Pashupatinath relief (Fig. 132), their smooth and mellifluent forms comparable to that of the Cha bahil Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 187). Equally graceful are Umā's attendants, one of whom holds a parasol above her mistress' head, another brings her cosmetics, and a third attends her feet. Indeed, the kneeling female is remarkably like the soft and alluring devotees at the feet of Avalokiteśvara. The figures of both Vīrabhadra and Kārttikeya are of the same type that we have already encountered in Licchavi sculptures (Figs. 60, 90), but the most captivating figure in the entire composition by far is Umā, for in no other relief does she recline with such poise and seductive elegance.

Apart from the superb handling of the dancing gaṇas and the exuberance of the rock formation, the most intriguing feature of the Rockefeller stele is Kārttikeya riding his father's bull (Fig. 133). This is repeated in two other representations and was obviously devised to emphasize the mischievousness of the boy. In at least one Indian sculpture of the Gupta period (Fig. 141) we see him seated contentedly on an indulgent Nandi's back. The sculptor of the Ullmann relief (Fig. 134) has also expressed this playfulness of Kārttikeya, although in a different fashion. Here the boy seems to reach out to his father with his left hand as if trying to attract his attention, while his right hand feeds his favourite peacock.

This playfulness of Kārttikeya is not only described in the Purāṇas, but also often fired the imagination of Sanskrit poets. The following verse, composed by an unknown poet, charmingly describes both the child's restless curiosity and his candor.

> He touches the garland made of skulls
> in hope that they are geese

and shakes the crescent moon with eagerness to grasp
a lotus filament. Thinking the forehead-eye a lotus flower,
he tries to pry it open. May Skanda thus intent on play
within his father's arms protect you.[1]

I have already demonstrated how the Nepali sculptors of these reliefs seem to have followed verbatim the *Matsya Purāṇa* description of the gaṇas. A few words may be added here about Śiva's faithful companion, the emaciated Bhṛṅgī, who is included in almost all the reliefs. It is said that he was reduced to his skeletal form because Umā cursed him for his unwavering devotion to Śiva. His dance, according to the poet Jogeśvara, is a dance of joy at the birth of the prince.[2] A second person who is present in most of the reliefs is Gaṅgā, the river-goddess. Normally she is supposed to remain in Śiva's matted hair, as a permanent fixture, like the moon and the skull. Indeed, so inseparable is she from his hair that this often arouses jealousy in Umā. In a beautiful verse the poet Bāṇa cleverly alludes to the rippling reflection of the moon in the river.

Victory to the Ganges' stream
placed high in Śambhu's crown,
wherein the new moon like a minnow
dives and surfaces.[3]

To my knowledge only in Nepal have the sculptors portrayed Gaṅgā as an acrobatic and flying figure with the stream of water flowing down from her hands into Śiva's hair.

For obvious reasons bronze representations of Umā-Maheśvara are less ambitious. The simplest composition is that seen in a charming bronze in the Swali collection in Bombay (Fig. 137), while the most elaborate is in a magnificent gilt-bronze in the Boston Museum (Fig. 135). In another impressive bronze, also in the Boston Museum (Fig. 138), both Umā and Maheśvara are placed on the back of the bull. It is noteworthy that in all of these examples, as also in the Harigaon relief of 1414 (Fig. 38), Umā sits on Śiva's lap. This appears to be a convention of the Malla phase and may have been borrowed from Bengal bronzes of the Pāla period. The transition from Uma's languorous posture in the Ṭhākurī reliefs to the more intimate position in these bronzes may be seen in the fourteenth century Bhadgaon relief (Fig. 136). Umā has barely edged her way into her husband's lap, and yet her body is still partially extended.

In the elaborate Boston bronze and in the Swali sculpture Umā's attitude is

[1] Ingalls, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 78.

expressive almost of hauteur by the elegant turn of the head, but in the simpler of the Boston bronzes (Fig. 133) she appears more complacent. Moreover, the feeling of intimacy between the couple and the animal is enhanced by the contrived but graceful twist of the bull's head. A flowing linear rhythm gently circumscribes the circular outline, and the composition becomes a complete mandala. These handsome bronzes clearly demonstrate the continued vitality of the tradition well into the Malla period.

C MISCELLANEOUS ŚAIVA SCULPTURES

VII

In a pair of sculptures, partly mutilated and standing in a garden in Visalnagar, we encounter a different type of Śiva-Pārvatī icon (Fig. 142). Unlike the Umā-Maheśvara theme, which has a narrative interest, here the two deities are portrayed as hieratic figures. Even though they can be viewed only partially and although Pārvatī's shoulders have been tragically restored with cement plaster, they form an impressive couple. Basically, the ithyphallic Śiva is given the same attributes as in the Umā-Maheśvara reliefs. He carries a pot in his lower left hand and a rosary in the upper right; the other hands are broken but they must have held the *mātuluṅga* and the trident, as they do in another such relief (Fig. 144). Pārvatī holds a mirror with her left hand and a boss with her right. In the second pair of such images at Patan (Fig. 143), a flower replaces Pārvatī's mirror, while the right hand holding a boss is supported by a lotus.

It will at once be apparent that there is very little difference, except in the attributes, between such a figure of Śiva and the conventional form of Viṣṇu (Fig. 116). In the Patan sculpture (Fig. 143) Śiva is not even ithyphallic, and his matted hair is completely covered by a crown, unlike the Visalnagar Śiva (Fig. 142). Moreover, in both sculptures Śiva grasps the rosary exactly as Viṣṇu clasps his wheel and, in the Patan figure, he is not even given his third eye. As we will have many an occasion to see, such multifarious uses of the same conceptual stereotypes were very common in Nepali art.

This type of hieratic icon of Śiva and Pārvatī certainly enjoyed less popularity than the Umā-Maheśvara sculptures. Apart from these two, an obviously earlier example stands in the temple of Bagh Bhairava at Kirtipur. The pair there is iconographically very similar to that at Visalnagar, except that both figures stand more intimately on the same base as in the Kosam sculpture (Fig. 7). The remaining

example (Fig. 144) is rather an indifferent work of the Malla period, although not altogether devoid of interest. The most significant innovation lies in the more graphic expression of intimacy between the two figures as one arm of each is entwined around the other's shoulder. In addition, the mounts of the deities are also included, though rather as caricatures. While the bull is a somewhat credible representation, it is obvious that the sculptor had no idea what the lion looked like, if at all the creature is meant to be a lion. The sculptor's, or perhaps the donor's, unflinching devotion to Śiva is further emphasized by the liṅgas that form an aureole behind the figures. This configuration, where each throws his arm around the other's neck, was applied to Śiva-Pārvatī images in India during the Gupta period, and its late appearance in Nepal can be best explained if we accept this solitary example to be a Malla period copy of a lost earlier model.

Unquestionably, the Visalnagar sculptures (Fig. 142) form the most imposing pair of such Śiva-Pārvatī icons. Śiva's form is forcefully modelled; the wide shoulders, the solid arms and the weighty, columnar legs impart to him the same sense of physical grandeur that is apparent in the seventh century Vaiṣṇava sculptures. Indeed, the form is closely comparable to that of the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu of A.D. 642 (Fig. 12), down to such details as the treatment of the sash around the waist. More pertinent is a comparison with the Sankhu Umā-Maheśvara relief (Fig. 130), for which a late seventh or early eighth century date has already been established. Especially similar are the figures of the two females, both in terms of modelling and ornamental details, such as ear-rings and bead girdles. Thus, not only must these two sculptures be regarded as contemporary works, but also they are very likely products of the same atelier. If the Visalnagar Śiva and Pārvatī (Fig. 142) are indeed works of the early eighth century, as they could well be, then they may have adorned a temple raised by the devout Śaiva monarch, Jayadeva II.

I have already discussed two other sculptures portraying Śiva, one of which is of a seated figure (Fig. 74) and the other, the enigmatic Virupākṣa (Fig. 75). An similar figure to the Virupākṣa, although stylisyically quite dissimilar, stands in the shrine of the Mother Goddesses in the temple of Bāghbhairava at Kirtipur (Figs. 145, 146). The face is rather effaced, but it closely resembles that in the superb ekamukhaliṅga (Fig. 121). A sculpture of equally striking simplicity, the Kirtipur figure has no crown or armlets; simple gypsy earrings and a pearl necklace with a central sapphire —typical of the Gupta period—are his only ornaments. The modelling is compact but soft and elegant, and, as we look at a profile view, the relief appears to be somewhat shallow. Curiously, the sculpture reminds one of Cambodian or Thai figures

of the sixth or seventh century, where one encounters a similar interpretation of Gupta ideals.

Śaiva temples of stone of any antiquity no longer exist, and a small shrine—of the north Indian *nāgara* type but without the tower—in the Paśupatinātha temple is the only witness that such structures were not uncommon, at least during the Ṭhākurī period. An impressive architectural fragment, portraying a lively row of dancing gaṇas, is now preserved in the archaeological garden at Patan (Figs. 147, 148). Other fragments may be seen in the Deo Patan area stuck on the walls of assorted buildings (Fig. 149). Although fragmentary, they are mute reminders of the imposing stone temples that must once have been the pride of the ancient city of Deo Patan.

Both Śiva and Pārvatī are immensely popular in the country, but the conjoint form of the deities, known technically as Arddhanārīśvara, does not seem to have been widely prevalent. Apart from the androgynous face on some of the mukhaliṅgas, a solitary example in bronze is now in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Fig. 150).

The sculptor has artfully distinguished the female and the male halves by means both subtle and obvious. Other than the prominent left breast, the more elaborate coiffure and hair ornaments, as well as the manner of extending the lower garment decorously to the left ankle, are obvious devices which emphasize the female half. More subtle are such elements as the slightly smaller size of the left half of the face, achieved by lowering the hairline along the temple, and the different waistlines. The waist is somewhat more constricted and the arc of the hip fuller in the female half than in the corresponding male portion. The upper right hand holds a trident, while the lower is broken; Pārvatī's upper hand grasps a stem, perhaps of a lotus, and the lower hand bears a pot. Śiva's hair is arranged in a chignon and his ear is adorned with a snake, while Pārvatī's coiffure is an elegant bun.

An imposing sculpture, its strict frontality imparts to it a sense of majestic dignity and poise. At the same time, the face, with its half-shut eyes, has an expression of serene humanity that is reminiscent of the radiantly calm and poignant faces of Gupta Buddhas (Fig. 19). Yet, the extreme elongation of the torso, as well as the slenderness of the arms that look like metal tubes, particularly those of Pārvatī, precludes the possibility of a date in the Licchavi period. The simple elegance and the linear definition of the form are comparable to the Varanasi female figure (Fig. 224) or the Deo Patan Māyā Devī (Fig. 87), which leads me to suggest a tenth century date, rather than the twelfth-thirteenth century put forth in the Boston catalogue.[1]

[1] *The Art of India and Nepal: The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection*, p. 83.

Philosophically, the Arddhanārīśvara form of Śiva and Pārvatī is said to reflect the non-duality of the Supreme Being. More amusing, however, are some of the explanations offered by Indian poets. One of them tells us that the somewhat baffled son of Śiva and Pārvatī, Kārttikeya, unable to understand the androgynous form of his parents, asked his elder and wiser brother Gaṇeśa for an explanation.

> "When father and when mother became a single body,
> what happened, elder brother, to the other halves of each?"
> Victory to Gaṇeśa, who explains to the young prince,
> "the one on earth was born as everyman, the other every woman."[1]

VIII

The sculptures discussed so far portray the placid forms of Śiva. In the Umā-Maheśvara theme he is a loving husband, a father devoted to his sons and a master fond of his weird attendants. This benign and lovable aspect of Śiva has had a special appeal for the Nepali for at least fifteen centuries. But Śiva also has a terrifying form, which he assumes occasionally for the purpose of destroying evil. This is the side of Śiva that devotees fear, and although Viṣṇu, too, often incarnates himself to destroy, his *avatāra* images inspire awe more than they appear forbidding, as do those of Śiva.

In his terrifying emanations Śiva is known generically as Bhairava or Rudra, the angry one. In Nepal, particularly, Bhairava is accorded a very significant place, and often the devout Nepali makes no distinction between Bhairava (Fig. 151) and the Buddhist god Mahākāla (Fig. 45). Mahākāla, an ancient name of Śiva, emphasizes his primary aspect as the cosmic destroyer. One of the earliest descriptions of Bhairava-Mahākāla occurs in the *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, where we are told that when the awe-inspiring god is shown with a swaying right hip, he is known as Bhairava, but when he is represented frontally (*sanmukha*) he should be called Mahākāla.[2] Both as Mahākāla and Bhairava, Śiva has a dark complexion, and according to a legend in the *Matsya Purāṇa*, an irate Pārvatī, on being insulted for her own complexion, retorts: "Thou callest me black; but Thou art well-known as very black (Mahā-Kāla).[3] That Śiva as Bhairava was already known as Mahākāla during the Gupta period is evident from Kālidāsa's beautiful description of the Mahākāla temple at Ujjaini.[4]

[1] Ingalls, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
[2] Shah, *op. cit.*, Ch. 59.
[3] *The Matsya-Purāṇam*, II, p. 108.
[4] Kālidāsa, *Meghadūtam*, (*Pūrvameghaḥ*), vv. 33-34.

Very likely the Vajrayāna Buddhists simply incorporated Mahākāla into their pantheon as freely as they adopted many other Brāhmaṇical divinities.

One of the earliest Nepali bronzes representing an unusual form of Bhairava is now in a private collection in New York (Fig. 151). The third eye, the preponderance of snakes, as also the elephant skin draping his body unquestionably identify the figure as Bhairava. In addition, the skull-cup, the battle axe and the elephant-goad are distinctive Śaiva attributes that emphasize his macabre or militant aspects. Appropriately, the angry god raises one of his left hands in the gesture of admonition (*tarjanīmudrā*), and the snakes crawling all over his ample torso enhance his forbidding appearance. Equally expressive of his wrath are the large, bulging eyes, while the elephant's hide is the flayed skin of the mighty Gajāsura destroyed by the god.

The bronze seems to be closely related to the eleventh century image of Mañjunātha at Kathmandu (Fig. 33), despite the fact that they reflect different plastic concepts. The sculptor of the Mañjunātha image displays a marked predilection for an abstract modelling with smooth, flowing surfaces. In the bronze figure, however, we see a more naturalistic delineation of the form in the swelling planes of the chest and belly, reminiscent of the much earlier figure of Varāha (Fig. 92). The facial features, particularly the eyes, are treated in a like manner in both the Mañjunātha and the Bhairava, as also in another bronze depicting Mañjuśri (Fig. 208). This unique bronze Bhairava is yet one more testimony to the artistic virtuosity of the Newari sculptor both in terms of form and content. Displaying great technical skill in casting, it anticipates the more complex forms that were created in such profusion during the Malla period.

Of the many representations of Bhairava or Mahākāla in the Malla period, few are as compelling or imaginative as a repoussé work at Varanasi (Fig. 152). Although the god stands militantly, his aggressiveness appears less sinister only because of the sculptor's delightful exploitation of the elements of design. And perhaps, none is more complex, in sheer technical dexterity, than a rare bronze in the Boston Museum (Fig. 153).

Known in this special form as Śrīkaṇṭha, Śiva dances in ecstacy as he copulates with his consort Guhyakālī. Both of the divinities have many heads and arms, and as they dance, they are supported by two supine figures. In the next register is shown a prostrate figure in the middle, perhaps a dead body, flanked by a bull and a lion, the mounts of the principal deities. Below are seated five personages, who may be identified as manifestations of Śiva representing the five elements or *pañca-bhūta*.

Although in certain tāntric cults the ritual copulation of Śiva and Śakti is implicit,

in art rarely are they so explicitly engaged in the sexual act. On the other hand, in Nepal tāntric Buddhism used such graphic imagery freely, and here we may have yet another example of Buddhist influence on Brāhmaṇical iconography. In view of the rarity of such icons, it seems not unlikely that, confronted with the task of portraying the couple, the sculptor adapted the type so commonly employed for images of Samvara and Nairātmā (Figs. 281-283), or other such Buddhist pairs.

As this discussion of Śaiva themes in Nepali sculpture is brought to a close, it will be apparent that the image of the dancing Śiva, so popular in Indian art, somehow did not capture the imagination of the Nepali sculptors. Perhaps, the most impressive sculpture is that of a dancing Bhairava, now in the National Museum in Kathmandu (Fig. 154). This is certainly not "a dance at which earth sinks, fire flames and all the mountains leap,"[1] but nonetheless, it is a charming and somewhat unusual interpretation of the theme. There is even a touch of whimsicality about the form of Bhairava, as he appears almost as an overgrown child masquerading as a sinister figure. Thus, despite his forbidding appearance, Śiva seems to have remained in Nepal a god more to be loved than to be feared.

[1] Ingalls, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

CHAPTER FIVE

BUDDHIST SCULPTURE

I

According to legend, the history of Buddhist art in Nepal begins with the five stūpas erected in Patan by the emporer Aśoka (3rd century B.C.), when he visited the valley. There seems no sculptural evidence, however, to take us back that far into history. Even the remains of Buddhist art of the Licchavi period are rather limited, although epigraphy attests to the flourishing condition of Buddhism during Licchavi rule. A large number of monasteries are mentioned in their inscriptions, but the iconography of the period may have been less rich, and the stūpa itself may still have enjoyed greater popularity than images of the Buddha or of Mahāyāna divinities.

Certainly some of the finest monuments of the Licchavi period are votive stūpas of rather small proportions but richly embellished. Particularly luxuriant is one at Cha bahil (Fig. 155), a neglected site with many other such outstanding stūpas. Interesting as they are for the history of Nepali architecture, basically such edifices remain a sculptor's handiwork. Very likely each of its niches once held simply a miniature caitya. The exquisiteness of the carving as well as the sumptuousness of the ornamentation is a testimony to the assured skill and vivid imagination of the sculptors during the Licchavi period.

The Nepali sculptor's innate sense of design is nowhere more apparent than in the decoration of another such caitya, also at Cha bahil (Fig. 156). Every motif is borrowed directly from the repertoir of the Gupta sculptors of Madhyadeśa in India. The heraldic lions, the flamboyant *makara*, the stately geese (*kalahaṁsa*) or the delightful *kinnara*, if transplanted on Indian soil, would be considered as works of Gupta sculptors. The vigorous directness of the carving, as well as the vivaciousness of the motifs, is immediately comparable to the richly carved decorative reliefs of the Gupta period (Fig. 157). Indeed, so strong is this resemblance that one wonders whether the more affluent monasteries in the valley did not actually import artists from such famous centres of sculpture as Sarnath or Mathura.

Equally exciting are those reliefs and fragments which have fortunately survived

the ravages of man and time, and are now arbitrarily stuck along the sides of later structures (Figs. 158-161). Somewhere we see a princely figure seated in meditation; elsewhere humble devotees of both sexes kneel in adoration. An odd wheel of the Law or an occasional deer gives us a tantalizing glimpse of the beautiful monuments they must once have adorned.

Some of the most charming Buddhist reliefs adorn the stūpa at Tukan bahal at Kathmandu (Fig. 162-164). In one of these, two sedent lions confront a *vajra*, the symbol of Vajrayāna Buddhism; in another, a pair of antelopes with flying scarves flanks a wheel of the Law; in the third, a human couple adore a flowering vase. It is rather interesting that in the majority of such decorative Buddhist reliefs the formal rock motif predominates. Perhaps this is an influence of the hills and mountains that surround the valley, although there is no attempt at naturalistic delineation. Rather, the Nepali artists give us even a more stylized and flamboyant version of the conceptualized rocks that the Indians had employed first at Sanchi and then at Ajanta.

Isolated as these reliefs are, their chronological context is difficult to determine. One such relief, however, now preserved in the National Museum (Fig. 165), is inscribed, and the paleography seems similar to that of sixth century inscriptions. Thus, by comparison, the few reliefs discussed above may safely be attributed to the seventh or eighth century. More importantly, whether the figures are those of humans or animals, they seem to live in a world of tranquility and gentleness as befitting the spirit of Buddhism.

II

I have already discussed a few sculptures representing Hāritī and a Bodhisattva figure that take the history of Buddhist art in Nepal back at least to the third century of the Christian era. No image of the Buddha, however, has as yet come to light that reflects any influence of either the Gandhāra or Mathura styles of the Kuṣāṇa period. Neither does the early school of the Āndhra country seem to have exerted any influence upon Buddhist art in Nepal.

One of the earliest images of the Buddha is unquestionably that standing in the compound of the Cha bahil in Deo Patan (Fig. 166). Although the hands are broken, very likely the right hand once displayed the gesture of munificence and the left held the ends of the robe slightly below the waistline. A more complete specimen may be seen standing at Bangemura in Kathmandu (Fig. 167).

Even at a cursory glance, it seems clear that the Cha bahil Buddha is closely related to the Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 8). Both share the same predilection

for heavy and ponderous form, a legacy of the native tradition, combined with a compliant and abstract modelling which stems from Sarnath. This seems to parallel the development at Mathura after its impact with the Sarnath style. Both the shoulders and the chest of the Cha bahil Buddha are wide and expansive, and the outline of the torso is delineated with less modulation than it is in a typical Sarnath Buddha (Fig. 19). The Cha bahil Buddha also has in common with the Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara the same rotund shape of the face rather than the Gupta oval, and the features are delineated less sharply. Perhaps, in both instances, the sculptors have subconsciously left the imprint of their own native ethnic features.

That both the images were closely modelled after a Sarnath prototype is evident, and yet the differences are equally palpable. The trough-like garment has a wider spread than is usual in Sarnath images. The left leg in both Nepali sculptures seems to be delineated slightly awkwardly, which makes the *déhanchement* (*tribhaṅga*) somewhat contrived. This not only links the two sculptures as probable products of the same atelier, but also indicates that the sculptors were still adopting their model hesitantly. This is especially true if we compare these sculptures with the Dhvaka baha images (Figs. 15, 16), where the treatment is more assured. Despite its strong similarity with the Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara of the mid-sixth century (Fig. 8), I am inclined to assign the Cha bahil Buddha to a slightly earlier date, perhaps the first quarter of the sixth century.

At least three other images of the Buddha, all of the same type, may be attributed to the sixth century. These are the recently brought to light Buddha standing majestically in a field near Harigaon (Fig. 168), a rather mutilated specimen standing near the Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara, and the splendid image at Bangemura (Fig. 167). Of these the Bangemura example is the best preserved and is perhaps the finest of the early Buddha images. The head and hands of the Gana bahal Buddha are recent and unfortunate attempts at restoration with cement plaster.

The close similarity of the Bangemura Buddha, both in terms of modelling and the physiognomical features, to the Cha bahil Buddha is beyond question. Iconographically, it is immediately related to late fifth century Sarnath stels (Fig. 19), where also we see two devotees kneeling at the feet of the Buddha. In general, however, the Nepali Buddhas continue the sense of ponderous volume one encounters in Mathura figures, although the drapery, both in its transparency and trough-like delineation, is adopted from Sarnath. Moreover, the shape of the faces of these Nepali Buddhas is somewhat distinct, full and fleshy and quite unlike the oval and sharply defined faces of the Sarnath Buddhas. In none of these early examples does the aureole show

the richness of carving and decoration noticeable in Sarnath steles. As in the Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 8), the aureole of the Bangemura Buddha is adorned only along the edge with what certainly appears to be an elementary flame design on the inside and beads on the outside. This seems to be the earliest instance of this combined motif and anticipates the more flamboyant version that became characteristic by the mid-seventh century (Fig. 169). In most of these early Buddhas the spread of the garment forms a much wider trough than one sees in Sarnath Buddhas, and where the volume is indicated along the edges, as in the Bangemura example (Fig. 167), the treatment is simple and not as fussy as in those from Sarnath. Thus, although the influences from the Gangetic plains were strong, the distinctiveness of the Nepali tradition is quite evident.

The Bangemura Buddha, in particular, epitomizes the poignancy and the spiritual elegance that are the hallmarks of the Gupta Buddha. The Gupta Buddha (Fig. 19) appears calm and serene, unreal in its ideal proportions, suggestive of a spiritual intent, and yet, it is not a product of mere intellection but is imbued with intense emotive qualities. Although the body is conceived in terms of an aggregate of abstract planes, it is not an exercise in pure abstraction and retains the sensuous and tactile qualities of the flesh beneath the transparent garment. Scholars have frequently read a conceptual dichotomy into this synthesis of the spiritual and the sensuous. This apparent 'dichotomy' disappears, however, if we remember that in the Indian way of thinking there is no imaginary gulf between the world of flesh and that of the spirit. Life is a total experience where the physical has as much relevance as the spiritual, with no clear dividing line. Hence, in art there is no distinction between the moral values of the sacred and the profane. The figure of a divinity is carved neither as an essay in austere abstraction nor devoid of sensuous charm, but as an idealized 'concept', where both the metaphysical attitude and the organic structure are combined in harmony. This is why the analogies for the limbs of the deities are always sought in nature, and the aesthetics of harmony predominate in the Indian and Nepali artistic traditions.

Dated sculptures clearly establish that by the mid-fifth century the Sarnath sculptors had created and perfected their style. It would only be natural to expect the Nepali artists to take some time to assimilate this new style whose impact upon the artistic worlds of South-east and Central Asia was profound and overwhelming. The Gupta style emerged as the result of a radically different concept of form and spiritual intent from the Kuṣāṇa period. While we do not yet know the circumstances or factors that brought this about, the standards set by the unknown masters of the

Sarnath or Mathura ateliers of the fourth-fifth century were to remain the yardstick for later generations of artists throughout north India and Nepal.

III

Basically the Sarnath type of Buddha image remained the model for Nepali Buddhas for centuries. In the type of figures where the Buddha is shown standing, a variation was introduced, presumably the idea being borrowed from Mathura, in the sense that while the garment still remained transparent, its volume was given additional emphasis by parallel striations in a stylized manner. Both these Sarnath and Mathura types are first represented together, as we have already seen, in the Dhvaka baha Licchavi caitya (Figs. 15, 16). It has also been pointed out that this type of monument is quite common in Nepal, and that it originated during the Licchavi period is evident from its designation, "Licchavi caitya".

At least three other such monuments deserve to be mentioned, as they reflect a considerable stylistic variation, although the theme remains the same. One of these is at Cha bahil (Fig. 170), the second in the Naga baha at Patan (Fig. 171), and the third within the Tham bahil at Kathmandu (Fig. 172). Of these, the Naga baha shrine shows the Buddha on one side of the monument, while the other sides are occupied by Maitreya, the future Buddha, Padmapāṇi and Vajrapāṇi. Each stands on a plain pedestal in graceful *déhanchement* against a background delineated as a rocky surface. The head of each figure is set off against an oval, flame-bordered halo. An additional flame is seen to emerge from the cranial bump of the Buddha.

In each of the other monuments identical figures of the Buddha are represented on all four sides. The right hand of each, with one exception, displays the gesture of munificence, while the left gathers up the ends of the garment. The exception is a Buddha in the Tham bahil monument who displays the gesture of reassurance (*abhayamudrā*). Among other minor differences all of the Buddhas in the Cha bahil monument (Fig. 170) hold the garment near the shoulder, while two of the Buddhas in the Tham bahil caitya hold their left hands below the waistline following the early tradition.

There are, of course, significant differences in the details of iconography and style between the Naga baha and the Dhvaka baha monuments. As a matter of fact, apart from the Dhavaka baha shrine (Fig. 13), none of the others maintains the niche concept. Instead, these figures are given more prominence as they stand out boldly from the shaft of the caitya. In the Cha bahil example the monument is not even a stūpa as in the others.

The Tham bahil and the Cha bahil Buddhas are rather heavily proportioned, and although both reflect the Nepali penchant for abstract modelling, they seem to have been modelled somewhat more harshly than the Naga baha Buddha. The body beneath the garment of the Naga baha Buddha appears much more resilient and sensuous when compared with the more bulky bodies of the other Buddhas. Yet, on the whole, in all these figures, there is a greater linear flow in the definition of the forms. In addition, the modelling of the Cha bahil and the Tham bahil Buddhas appears mannered and hard, especially when they are compared with the smooth and suave delineation of the form in the Dhvaka baha caitya (Figs. 15, 16).

Among noteworthy details, it may be pointed out that all the Buddhas in the Tham bahil caitya (Fig. 172) are given striated garments. In the Cha bahil monument, the background is left plain, as also the halo which is ornamented simply with linear designs in rather a unique fashion. The Naga baha Buddha stands against a rocky background and the oval halo is circumscribed by flames. In the Tham bahil caitya the flame design is even more prominent, while the rockery with swaying tips is confined to the spaces on either side of the Buddha's head.

Stylistically, all three monuments seem later than the Dhvaka baha shrine. The figure that is closest to the Dhvaka baha Buddhas, in terms of the elegance of the posture, the softness of the modelling as well as the naturalism in the treatment of the drapery, seems to be the Naga baha Buddha. It still appears to adhere more faithfully to the classical canons of a Sarnath Buddha than do the others. Thus, while the Naga baha caitya may have been raised towards the end of the eighth, the Cha bahil and the Tham bahil caityas would appear to be later by at least a century, if not more.

No bronze image of the Buddha has yet been discovered that can indubitably be attributed to the Licchavi period. The most outstanding bronze sculpture of the Buddha (52 inches) is preserved in the temple of Vajrayoginī at Sankhu. One scholar has suggested a fifth century date for it, but this is much too early, and a more realistic date is the eleventh, as suggested by Sharma.[1] Three other similar bronzes are known, the earliest of which is perhaps that in the British Museum (Fig. 173). The Rockefeller Buddha (Fig. 174) seems closely related to the Tham bahil sculptures and appears to be slightly later than the British Museum image. The remaining example, in a private collection in New York (Fig. 175), is very likely of the same date as the Sankhu Buddha.

[1] B. Srivastava, "Sankhu Buddha", *Purātattva*, 1, pp. 85ff. P. R. Sharma, "A Note no some Bronzes at Vajrayogini", *Tribhuvan University Journal*. I have only an offprint of Mr. Sharma's article, which unfortunately does not carry the date or volume number of the journal.

Basically, all four bronzes continue the type of Mathura Buddha (Fig. 17) as interpreted by the sculptor of the Dhvaka baha caitya (Fig. 16). The garment in the bronzes is given a wider spread affording a clearer view of the sinuous outline, while the ends are treated with greater exhuberance, which seems to increase with the years. With great skill the sculptor has combined the broad definition of the volume beneath the garment and a rhythmic flow of linear movement, expressed by undulating striations as well as by the rippling edges of the garment. Both the facial features and the modelling retain a softness characteristic of Nepali sculpture, and the form is defined with utmost economy.

This emphasis on the linear definition of the form is also evident in a somewhat later Buddha embedded picturesquely on the bank of the Bagmati (Fig. 176). Both in terms of its proportions and physiognomical features, the sculpture is closely related to the Rockefeller bronze (Fig. 174). It is rather curious that Madanjeet Singh has suggested a fifth-sixth century date for this figure, while attributing a ninth-tenth century date for a standing Buddha at Svayambhunath.[1] It seems impossible to accept such an early date for the Bagmati Buddha, if we compare it with the Dhvaka baha shrine (Figs. 15-16), or with the little bronze in the Los Angeles County Museum (Fig. 26). Neither is it possible to maintain that the Nepali example is earlier than the eighth century Buddha from Bihar (Fig. 21).

It may be of interest to compare the Nepali Buddhas with contemporary Pāla versions from Bihar. That they are all derived ultimately from the Sarnath-Mathura models of the Gupta period is beyond doubt. And while the Nepalis continued to manifest a predilection for soft and abstract modelling with smooth and sensuous surfaces, the sculptors of Pāla Bihar and Bengal seemed inclined to a more naturalistic modelling, whereby they clearly defined the different planes of the body, particularly the abdominal area. As I have noted before, and will have occasion to discuss again, there seems little ground to assert that the Nepali tradition was strongly influenced by the Pāla style.

IV

Only a few reliefs depict incidents from the life of the Buddha, and in all these the portrayal is strictly frontal and formal. In one of the earliest steles the Buddha is seated as if in a cave, attended by two Bodhisattvas (Fig. 177). Curiously, both Bodhisattvas hold the lotus with their left hands and a flywhisk with their right. This

[1] Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

arrangement is reminiscent of the countless triads at Kanheri, where two such Bodhisattvas, frequently indistinguishable, accompany the Buddha almost ubiquitously (Fig. 53). Very likely one of the Bodhisattvas in the Patan triad represents Avalokiteśvara and the other Vajrapāṇi as we have in a later relief (Fig. 182).

That the relief portrays an incident from the Buddha's life is evident from the two or more figures whose outlines can only be faintly discerned in the mutilated section of the stele. It is rather curious that the sculptor has hollowed the background into a concave curve, evidently to impart a greater sense of depth to the relief. On either side of the simple circular halo behind the Buddha's head are very lightly etched, like the flowers in the sixth century Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 8), branches and leaves of the Bodhi tree. It thus seems incontrovertible that the incident portrayed occurred at Bodhgaya after the Master's enlightenment. The Buddha's hands appear to be resting on his lap, and if the kneeling figure below his left knee is a female, she may be Sujātā offering rice and milk to the Lord. However, because of the mutilated condition of the stele, a more definite identification seems difficult.

Although the relief appears to be an architectural piece, it stands, like a conventional image, upon a pedestal which bears a sixth century inscription. The stone is of the same bluish-black variety used for the Cha bahil Buddha or the Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara (Figs. 166, 8). I have also pointed out how the leaves and branches of the Bodhi tree are etched in a manner identical to the flowers lightly essayed on either side of the head of the Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara. In addition, the plain circular haloes, the soft but firm modelling of the figures, and the identical iconography of the two Bodhisattvas would seem to confirm a sixth century date. In passing, it may be noted that the tall crowns of the Bodhisattvas occur only in this relief.

A very similar stele, probably of the same date, is stuck on the wall of a modern structure on the bank of the Siddhapokhri at Bhadgaon (Fig. 178). Here also the Buddha is flanked by two lotus- and flywhisk-bearing Bodhisattvas as he sits in the yogic posture on a lotus. On either side of the lotus are a seated couple, who appear to be royal personages; and a horse's head, similar to that in the two Viṣṇu vikrānta reliefs (Figs. 1, 2), may be discerned above the seated king. It is difficult to determine which royal visit is portrayed here; a probable identification is that the king is Prasenajit of Kośala. On the other hand, the couple may represent royal donors who commissioned the relief. The close stylistic affinity of this sculpture with the Patan stele just discussed or with the Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara needs little emphasis, and very likely all three are the works of the same atelier.

Only a fragment of what must once have been a magnificent relief depicting the

temptation of Śākyamuni is now preserved in the National Museum at Kathmandu (Fig. 179). As Christ was tempted by Satan, so was Śākyamuni by the Buddhist genius of evil, Māra, when the Master was about to be enlightened at Bodhgaya. In the relief, a charming female who is no doubt Māra's daughter, sways languorously along with her equally enticing companion. They are accompanied by a horde of demons militantly attacking Śākyamuni. Curiously one of the demons is portrayed as Gaṇeśa, the Brāhmaṇical deity of benevolence, thereby reflecting a distinct sectarian bias. Creatures of delightful fantasy, the demons seem almost convincing in their sinister expressions and aggressiveness.

Two reliefs at Patan, one of which is illustrated here (Fig. 180), portrays the incident of the Buddha's descent from the Tuṣita heaven in an identical fashion. The incident is considered to be one of the eight great miracles of the Buddha's life which were popular with Indian artists of the Gupta period (Fig. 20), although individual reliefs portraying the theme are not very common. The story runs that after his enlightenment the Buddha went to the Tuṣita heaven to preach the doctrine to his parents. He returned to the earth at a place called Saṅkīsa and was accompanied by Indra, supporting a parasol, and Brahmā, holding a flywhisk. This is exactly what the sculptor has faithfully portrayed in the Patan relief. Once again the Buddha is a conventional figure, and the composition is governed by demands of frontality rather than by a narrative intent. Obviously the relief was regarded as an image to be worshipped, and the incident was reduced merely to an essential visual formula. Apart from the Deo Patan Nativity relief (Fig. 87), this seems to be the only complete stele that depicts one of the eight great miracles of the Buddha's life.

V

The image of the Buddha, as perfected in India during the Gupta period, remained the norm for generations of artists in many countries of Asia. Basically the figure shows a heavily robed monk, either standing or seated, with his head covered with tiny curls and crowned by a cranial bump known as the *uṣṇiṣa*. This prototype was used endlessly with slight variations or modifications not only to represent the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, but also to depict the past Buddhas as well as such transcendental Tathāgatas as Akṣobhya, Amitābha, et al. A similar conceptual limitation is also apparent in the Nepali Buddha images.

Of the seated Buddhas perhaps the earliest is that which is tucked away in a niche of a caitya near the temple of Kumbheśvara in Patan (Fig. 181). Seated on a lotus

in the ideal posture of a yogī, the Buddha makes the gesture of reassurance with his right hand, while the left rests in his lap. Undoubtedly, the canons applied here are those of Sarnath, and the figure is very similar to the Cha bahil or Bangemura Buddhas (Figs. 166, 167) except that he is seated here. The radiant and serene expression of the face, the half-closed eyes reflecting an introspective mood, the webbed fingers of the right hand, are all classic features of the Gupta Buddha (Fig. 19). Even such details as the lotus petals are also treated in the Sarnath fashion. A significant difference is that the shape of the Nepali Buddha's face is considerably more round than that of the Sarnath Buddha, and in addition, it seems to have even a softer and almost more human expression.

The seated Buddhas of the Dhvaka baha caitya (Fig. 13) have already been discussed. In no significant way do they differ from the Patan Buddha. Indeed, once the type was firmly established, it persisted through the Ṭhākurī (Figs. 182-184) and well into the Malla periods (Fig. 43). Almost invariably in seated Buddha figures the upper garment is of the plain Sarnath variety. Generally, in the images of the Licchavi and the Ṭhākurī periods, the garment covers both shoulders, but when the right hand hangs down, either to display the *bhūmisparśamudrā* (Fig. 184) or the *varadamudrā*, the sculptors seem to have left the right shoulder bare so that the arm remains free. Usually also the border of the upper garment, indicated only by simple lines, is left relatively plain. In the Malla period, however, particularly after the fifteenth century, the borders are often embellished with floral designs; the under garment is pleated near the right breast; and the end of the *saṅghāti* brought back over the left shoulder with a flourish. Needless to say, the modelling of the figures in the Malla period is decidedly coarse and mannered, completely lacking the vitality of earlier sculptures. The carving of an image was no longer a creative act but a repetitive performance where the formula had become stale and lifeless.

A fairly large number of the seated variety of Buddha images belong to the Ṭhākurī period, and of these a particularly attractive triad may be seen in Patan (Fig. 182). Here the Buddha is seated on a lotus in the posture of a yogī and his hands are engaged in the gesture of turning the wheel of the Law (*dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*), symbolizing his first sermon at Sarnath. He is flanked by two Bodhisattvas, Padmapāṇi on his right and Vajrapāṇi on his left, each standing on a lotus. A kneeling devotee on a smaller lotus receives blessings from Padmapāṇi, while the dwarf on Vajrapāṇi's left is the personified representation of the attribute, *vajra* or the thunderbolt. The lotuses are beautifully rendered and all emanate from

the same stem, thereby emphasizing the conceptual integrity of all five figures.

As is usual in such steles, the composition is dominated by absolute symmetry in the arrangement of the figures. Despite the somewhat static and frontal configuration, the stele is considerably enlivened by the rhythmic exuberance of the lotus stalks and flowers, as also by the flames of the aureoles. The flowers and leaves are delineated naturalistically, but the figures continue to be modelled in a suave though summary manner. The smooth bodies are defined as pure linear statements rather than as modelled surfaces. Corporeal imperfections are the misfortunes of mortals; the gods must always have flawless bodies. The Bodhisattvas are considerably more linear, and, while the treatment of their form appears somewhat more mannered than the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattvas of the seventh century (Figs. 13, 14), they are not as stiff as Sūrya's attendants in the eleventh century reliefs (Figs. 28, 29). Nonetheless, the astonishing persistence of both types and styles in Nepal becomes evident as we pursue such comparisons.

Among the other seated Buddha images an outstanding, though headless, example is that which is placed against the Cha bahil stūpa (Fig. 183). In terms of modelling the figure is very similar to the ninth century Los Angeles bronze (Fig. 26), but because of the exuberant delineation of the lotus I am inclined to consider it as a somewhat later example. The gesture of the Buddha's right hand—known as *bhūmisparśamudrā*—is, like the *dharmacakrapravatana*, exclusively Buddhist. Literally, the word means "touching the earth", and the gesture was invented to symbolize the occasion when the Buddha resisted the temptations of Māra, the Buddhist genius of evil, and as he was alone at the time, called upon the Earth to witness his victory. The image, however, may represent the Tathāgata Akṣobhya, for the same iconography is also given to him. For instance, in a charming bronze of the period (Fig. 184), on account of the thunderbolt on the pedestal, the figure can just as easily be identified as Akṣobhya. It may be pointed out that although the Cha bahil Buddha makes the *bhūmisparśamudrā*, his body is completely draped, whereas usually in such instances the right shoulder is left bare, as in the bronze. Such deviations, however, have no symbolic significance and probably reflect the idiosyncrasy of a particular artist.

Finally, in the only other type of Buddha image known from the Ṭhākurī period, we see a fully robed figure seated in what is commonly described as the European fashion (Fig. 185). Although the Buddha here continues to be shown in the guise of a monk, his regal character is apparent, particularly in the enthroned example from Nalanda (Fig. 186). There is some ambiguity in the identification of such figures, for

he may represent either the Buddha Śākyamuni or the future Buddha Maitreya. In formal terms, however, there is no difference between such a figure and the standing Buddhas (Figs. 174, 175). Derived very likely from such monumental imperial portraits as those of the Kuṣāṇa kings at Mathura, the posture was adopted for both the Buddha and Maitreya during the Gupta period, particularly at Sarnath and Ajanta, to express the spiritual majesty of Buddhahood.

VI

Apart from the cult of the Buddha, that of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara or Padmapāṇi has remained of paramount importance in Nepal. As Matsyendranātha, he is a national god, revered both by the Hindus and the Buddhists. Certainly a larger number of Nepali bronzes portray Avalokiteśvara than almost any other divinity of either religious system. That his cult goes back at least to the sixth century is evident from the inscribed Gana bahal image (Fig. 8), which I have already discussed.

Avalokiteśvara, or Padmapāṇi, as he is alternately called, is the most important of the Bodhisattvas, as he presides over the present eon (*kalpa*) until the appearance of the future saviour Maitreya. A god of infinite compassion, he is always represented in early art as a gentle figure exuding serene humanity. More than the conventional iconographic texts, the following litany by a celebrated Buddhist scholar, Ratnakīrti, better expresses the vision that inspired some of the finest representations of this Boddhisattva in Nepal.

> All conquering is the Savior of the World.
> His lotus hand, stretched down in charity,
> is dripping streams of nectar to assuage
> the thirsty spirits of the dead.
> His glorious face is bright with gathered moonlight
> and his glance is soft
> with that deep pity that he bears within.[1]

In the Gana bahal sculpture, the Bodhisattva has matted hair as in other Bodhisattva figures of the Gupta period (Fig. 20), although the hair in front, wherein is inset a tiny effigy of Amitābha, is delineated more stylishly than in contemporary Indian figures. On the other hand, the ubiquitous sash of the Indian Bodhisattva, where it is given its own volume, is here merely indicated by parallel lines diagonally

[1] Ingalls, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

across the thighs. Only a single devotee with offerings of flowers kneels near the god's right foot. If a male, he may represent Maṇigupta, the donor.

Significant changes may be noticed in the Dhvaka baha Padmapāṇi of the seventh century (Fig. 13). The kneeling female is more suavely and richly modelled than the devotee in the Gana bahal sculpture, and certain novel iconographic features are introduced. Principal among these are the snake-armlets, the distinct crown on the head (of the same variety that is given to Viṣṇu), and the volumetric delineation of the heavy sash across the thighs. Usually the serpent-armlets (*sarpavalaya*) adorn the arms of Śiva, but in the Sarnath Bodhisattvas, we do find a kind of armlet that is basically serpentine though it ends in *makara* heads. The crown, however, is not common for Bodhisattva images in northern India, although a tiara is more frequently seen on heads of Bodhisattvas at Ajanta, Kanheri (Fig. 53), and Ellora. The heavy sash is, of course, an indispensible part of the Bodhisattva's attire in India.

Basically, this superb example of the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi, embellishing the Dhvaka baha caitya, remained the model for almost the next thousand years. The difference between the Dhvaka baha Padmapāṇi of the seventh century and that at Svayambhunath (Fig. 46), dedicated in the year 1677, is one of technical accomplishment rather than typological. Between these two extremities one can assign countless other examples, both in stone and bronze, which not only reflect the enormous popularity that this Bodhisattva enjoyed as a cult-deity, but also manifest the tireless skill with which Nepali sculptors over the centuries continued to produce beautiful images.

Two of the most outstanding examples stand at Cha bahil and at Kathesimbhu in Kathmandu (Figs. 187, 188). Compared to the Dhvaka baha Padmapāṇi (Fig. 13), these figures are relatively more slim and their forms are defined with a distinct penchant for linear grace. Each stele has two females who kneel on separate lotuses that spring from the same parent stalk. Two nāga figures are added on either side of the central stalk in the Cha bahil example. The edge of the aureole in each relief is decorated with two bands of design, the flame motif on the outside and a meandering floral motif on the inside. Moreover, the Cha bahil Bodhisattva is provided with an additional halo decorated with the pearl and flame motif. A single strand of pearls adorns the neck of the Cha bahil Padmapāṇi, while the Kathesimbhu Padmapāṇi has a double string of pearls. The similarities between the two images, however, far outweigh their differences, and it would be difficult to attribute them to different periods.

Stylistically, it would seem that the two reliefs must be placed somewhere between the Dhvaka baha Padmapāṇi of the seventh century and the Zimmerman Viṣṇu of 1004 or the Patan Sūrya images, also of the eleventh century (Figs. 28-30). There is also no doubt that both these Padmapāṇi reliefs are remarkably similar to that at Yengu bahal (Fig. 50). However, we have already discussed the difficulties in accepting an eighth century date for the Yengu bahal Padmapāṇi. An eleventh century date would be more in accordance with the stylistic evidence. Compared to the Cha bahil and Kathesimbhu Padmapāṇis (Figs. 187, 188), the Yengu bahal figure is somewhat more stiff and mannered and its modelling less sensitive—features that are also characteristic of the attendants in the eleventh century Sūrya images (Figs. 28, 29). In addition, the flame and floral design of the aureoles is even more flamboyant than the delineation of these elements in the Cha bahil and Kathesimbhu Bodhisattvas. It appears, therefore, that these two Padmapāṇi reliefs are considerably earlier than the dated sculptures of the eleventh century.

On the other hand, it seems incontestable that the Cha bahil and Kathesimbhu Padmapāṇis are later than the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattva (Fig. 13). Kramrisch has suggested an eighth century date for the Kathesimbhu Bodhisattva[1] but, because of the greater attenuation of the form and of the elaborate flame and floral design of the aureole, an early ninth century date would be stylistically more acceptable. It may be pointed out that the most conspicuous differences between this sculpture and the Dhavaka baha Bodhisattva, apart from the greater linearization of the former, are the design of the crown, the form of the ear ornaments, and the peculiar manner of representing the sacred thread. The thread now comes down to the sash, around which it forms a peculiar loop and then reappears above the right knee. Subsequently, this became a stylistic cliché and appears to have persisted only for images of Padmapāṇi even into the seventeenth century (Fig. 46). Curiously, this mannerism does not seem to have been applied to other Bodhisattva images. The triple-lobed crown, although used for the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattva where it first appears, has now taken a distinctive form that will continue for centuries with little change. It may be mentioned that the base of the crown along the edge of the temple, in some instances, is left plain but in others, it is decorated with one or two rows of pearls.

In all these reliefs, including the Dhvaka baha example, Padmapāṇi's left hand holds the stalk of a lotus that springs with great exuberance from the pedestal. The stalk sways in a serpentine fashion as it rises to support a full-blown flower. In the

[1] Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

Cha bahil and Yengu bahal examples (Figs. 187, 50), in addition to the flower, the stem supports a bud and a leaf, rendered in the former with considerable naturalism. The right hand in every instance displays the gesture of munificence (*varadamudrā*). In the Dhvaka baha caitya (Fig. 13) the hand simply rests against the uncut stone, while in the others a lotus is provided for it. Thus, such additions and elaborations would also indicate that the Cha bahil and the Kathesimbhu images were probably created sometime after the Dhvaka baha Padmapāṇi.

A number of variations upon the theme are illustrated here from succeeding periods. Perhaps the most elegant bronze example is that standing in a corner of the courtyard of the Kwa bahal (Fig. 189). Although the face is damaged, one can still discern its exquisite features as well as the benign expression, echoing the pensiveness of the great Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi in Cave 1 at Ajanta. The ideally proportioned figure stands as an epitome of physical grace, and his body is modelled with a smoothness reminiscent of a Sarnath Bodhisattva (Fig. 22). The transparent dhoti clings to the thighs and its volume is indicated by rippling folds between the legs. The torso is remarkably bare except for a single strand of pearls around the neck, the delicately rendered sacred thread and a pair of plain bangles adorning the wrists. Indeed, both the classic proportions and the elegant simplicity of the sculpture reflect the Nepali artists' perfect understanding of the Gupta idiom and their continued use of the classical features well into the ninth century.

An almost equally elegant Padmapāṇi as the Kwa bahal example is in a private collection (Fig. 190). This figure manifests the same predilection for simplicity and essential volumes as does the other. The Bodhisattva here stands on a simple lotus pedestal with a *fleur de lis* pattern etched on each petal. This particular design occurs for the first time in the lotus incised decoratively at the top of the stele carrying the famous Pashupatinath inscription of Jayadeva II (A.D. 737) and again may be seen on the lotus of another image (Fig. 182). The absence of armlets of any kind, as in the Kwa bahal image, emphasizes the simplicity of the torso, and the surface seems smooth and resilient to the touch. Unlike the other image, however, the head here is sumptuously enhaloed by a flaming aureole, and the right hand is raised as if it once held a flywhisk, as early Bodhisattvas often do (Figs. 23, 53). In terms of the design of the lotus and the treatment of the aureole, the bronze seems clearly related to the Patan steles. The modelling is similar to that of the Kwa bahal Padmapāṇi (Fig. 189), sharing with it the same penchant for smooth, uninterrupted surfaces. The facial expressions of both reflect a serenity befitting the compassionate nature of the Bodhisattva.

Two other bronzes and an elaborate stele, all representing Padmapāṇi (Figs. 191-193), may generally be assigned to the Ṭhākurī period. The Yampi baha example (Fig. 191), basically of the same variety as the Cha bahil and Kathesimbhu images (Figs. 187, 188), is more ornately fashioned. Rather than lotuses rising directly from the waters, here three separate lotuses in the form of pedestals support the Bodhisattva and his two female devotees. The simple serpent-armlets of the Bodhisattva are now replaced with jewelled armlets, the medallions repeating the design of the tiara-lobes. The magnificent aureole is enriched with luxuriant floral scrolls and flame motifs that almost obscure the figures. Stylistically, the kneeling figures are comparable to the two ladies in the Zimmerman Viṣṇu plaque of 1004, while the flamboyance of its decorative design seems closer to the Naksal Sūrya. It, thus, seems difficult to accept this as a relief of the early eighth century[1]; a tenth or early eleventh century date would be more appropriate.

At least one of the two bronzes (Fig. 192) is closely related to the Yampi baha Padmapāṇi. Both figures are similarly modelled and have identical ornaments, particularly the armlets, the necklace and the crown. In addition, the bronze Padmapāni has spur-like *śankhapatras* emerging from behind the ears. Unlike the sacred thread of the stone figure, however, that of the bronze consists of two strands of pearls joined in several places both in the front and the back by jewelled clasps. Moreover, as in the stone example, the stem of the lotus begins its journey abruptly from a point near the left thigh. Once again, a Nepali sculptor manifests his inherent sense of visual design in the form and details of the dhoti and the exquisitely rendered flame aureole. While acting as a delimiting frame, the aureole brings the figure into clear focus and helps to direct our eyes at once to the deity.

The same exuberance and flair for design that characterize the bronze just discussed is apparent in the treatment of the dhoti in another impressive bronze Padmapāṇi (Fig. 193), although somewhat differently modelled and proportioned. It is by now obvious that originally an image such as that at Dhvaka baha (Fig. 13) must have served as the prototype for all these sculptures. It is also clear that the artists possessed little freedom to alter the basic iconography or the established configuration of the figure, for the norms, once sanctioned and traditionally accepted, were practically regarded as immutable. Nevertheless, as we have frequently seen, the artists often chose to differ in their treatment of the salient details, thereby perhaps satisfying their creative urge. For instance, while the dhoti of the Wiener bronze (Fig. 193), shows the same design as in another (Fig. 192), there is an additional fold across the

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 34.

left thigh and the sash is oriented from the left to the right rather than the other way around, which is more common. The left earring is also of a different kind, the tiara less substantially treated, while the left hand, held unusually high, appears to make the gesture of exposition (*vyākhyānamudrā*).

Less detailed in terms of the design of the garments but more exuberant in the treatment of the elaborate ornaments is a bronze Padmapāṇi in the Los Angeles County Museum Collection (Fig. 194). Altogether there is a greater fussiness in surface details, not only in the jewelry and the crown, but also in the folds of the dhoti between the legs. The modelling is still sensitive, and the face has a benign and compassionate expression, although admittedly the emphasis on surface details somewhat detracts from the appreciation of the modelled areas. It would, thus, seem that compared to the other bronzes just discussed, this must be considered a later example, perhaps of the twelfth or the thirteenth century.

Progressively the style becomes more mannered as is evidenced by the wellknown Boston Padmapāṇi (Fig. 195) and by another in the Kwa bahal (Fig. 196). The additional tilt of the head of the Boston Padmapāṇi or the greater exuberance of the garment's pleats in both does not quite compensate for the stiffness of the posture or the hardness of the modelling. The lower part of the sacred thread forms a wide loop parallel to the almost median loop of the sash, which no longer goes across the thighs in a diagonal fashion. It is rather a commentary on the deceptive persistence of a style in Nepali sculpture that Coomaraswamy once suggested a ninth century date for the Boston Padmapāṇi. Considering the evidence we now have at our disposal, a fourteenth century date would be more realistic.

Generally by the fifteenth century, at least in stone, the Nepali sculptors seem to have exhausted themselves. Centuries of stylistic and thematic repetition had stultified the tradition, as may be seen from two sculptures representing Padmapāṇi from the later Malla period (Figs. 197, 46). In bronze, however, the sculptors continued to produce works of considerable charm and beauty. And often, as in an elegant bronze representing Sugatisandarśana Lokeśvara (Fig. 198)—a tāntric manifestation of Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara—elaboration of an iconographic nature allowed the sculptors to infuse their images with a new vitality. Although the Nepali penchant for smooth surfaces and a gentle facial expression is here still apparent, the body is modelled with an unusual naturalism that may reflect a vague awareness of the Pāla tradition.

Of the seated images of this variety, the outstanding are a rather effaced Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara at Cha bahil (Fig. 199) and a splendid bronze figure at Kwa bahal (Fig.

200). Substantially, the latter is no different from the standing Padmapāṇi figures, although in terms of its expressive spirituality it remains an inspired bronze of the Ṭhākurī period. The sculpture of Siṁhanāda Lokeśvara, riding a lion, is a rare depiction of this divinity. Despite the effaced condition of the stele, its merits as an outstanding sculpture are easily discernible. As the Bodhisattva sits gracefully like a prince on a lion, he is worshipped by several females. The foliage above perhaps represents a wish-fulfilling tree (*kalpavṛkṣa*), while the form of the snake-entwined trident can just be recognized parallel to his left arm. Stylistically, the sculpture must be the handiwork of the same atelier that created the Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 187) standing only a few feet away. Both figures reflect similar proportions and svelte modelling, while the adoring females are almost identical.

VII

A type of Bodhisattva figure unique to Nepal is that of Vajrapāṇi, one of the constant companions of the Buddha in steles of the Kuṣāṇa period. His earliest representation in Nepal occurs in the Dhvaka baha caitya (Fig. 14). Basically, there is little difference between this figure and that of Avalokiteśvara. Vajrapāṇi has a slightly different crown and the sash is tied on his right side rather than his left. The most distinctive difference, however, lies in the representation of his attribute, the thunderbolt (*vajra*), as a personified dwarf. The dwarf, adorned with a snake, stands in a determined posture with his arms folded across his chest in a gesture of humility (*vinayahasta*). From his head emerges part of a thunderbolt which is grasped by the Bodhisattva.

A number of other examples of this type of image are known. I have earlier discussed a stele where Vajrapāṇi accompanies the Buddha (Fig. 182). Among others are a badly mutilated piece at Cha bahil (Fig. 201) and two rather small but charming bronzes (Figs. 202, 203), of which that at Los Angeles is no doubt the simpler of the two. Indeed, the austere though smooth simplicity of the torso, adorned only with a string of pearls, is also reflected by the unostentatious crown and halo. The latter repeats the shape of the crown and thereby enhances the illusion of height. Both Vajrapāṇi and the dwarf stand on a simple rectangular base and the Bodhisattva's sash is tied on the right as in the Dhvaka baha image. The other bronze (Fig. 203), in which both the Bodhisattva and his attendant stand on lotuses, is somewhat more sumptuously adorned. The dhoti is of the patterned variety and the folds fall between the legs in elegant ripples. By contrast, in the Los Angeles Bodhisattva, the dhoti is

tightly wrapped over the thighs and there are no pleats between the legs. In addition, both arms of the Humann figure have armlets, although not of the serpent variety, and the necklace is more elaborate. The earrings of the Humann bronze are of the more conventional type, whereas they are somewhat unusual in the Los Angeles figure. The right hand of the Humann figure still holds the boss, but the palm is turned towards the body as is often found with Gandhāra and Kashmiri Bodhisattvas. The face of the Humann Bodhisattva has a round shape with softly delineated features and displays a gentler expression. This sense of svelte elegance is also heightened by the stylish hair design with cascading locks and spectacular plumage. In contrast, the face is more oval in the Los Angeles bronze, and although abraded, the features are more sharply defined. The expression is somewhat more severe and has a regal bearing, a quality only enhanced by the prominent crown.

This crown of the Los Angeles figure is distinctive and occurs only in one other instance—the Naga baha Vajrapāṇi (Fig. 204). Although the surface of the Naga baha crown is more ornate, its basic shape is like that of the Los Angeles Vajrapāṇi. To my knowledge, such a crown for a deity is unknown in India, although it may have been familiar during the Gupta period. A stylistic trait borrowed more definitely from the Gupta tradition is the elegant hair design of the Humann Vajrapāṇi. A further legacy of the Gupta tradition is the manner of personifying the attribute. Although commonly seen in Viṣṇu images of the Gupta period, dwarf attendants are also attached to Bodhisattvas, river goddesses, and doorkeepers at both Aurangabad (Fig. 23) and Ellora. Some of the Bodhisattvas at Ellora even have attendants who cross their arms in *vinayahasta*. Finally, one relief in Kanheri convincingly shows the dwarf Vajra sitting behind Indra with his arms crossed against his chest and the prong of the thunderbolt emerging from his head (Fig. 53).

Stella Kramrisch has suggested a late eighth century date for the Los Angeles Vajrapāṇi, a date that seems acceptable on a stylistic comparison with the Dhvaka baha figures. A similar date, or perhaps the early eighth century, may also be attributed to the Humann bronze. Thus, these two sculptures, and possibly two others (Figs. 96, 218), may be the only surviving bronzes from the Licchavi period.

In the Naga baha Vajrapāṇi (Fig. 204) the personified attribute is dispensed with, and instead, the left hand of the Bodhisattva clasps the thunderbolt. The ear ornaments are of the same kind as seen in the Los Angeles Vajrapāṇi (Fig. 202) and the sash is now tied on the left, as is usual for other Bodhisattva figures. Evidently the knot and the flowing end of the sash were transferred to the right in the other sculptures in order to accommodate the dwarf attendant. The right hand rests

against a lotus as in the Cha bahal and the Kathesimbhu Padmapāṇis (Figs. 187, 188). An additional feature of the Naga baha Vajrapāṇi is the thin strip of cloth tied around the waist and thereby serving as a *kaṭibandha* or waist band. Almost an identical band is similarly tied in figures of Indra at Paharpur and in Nepal (Fig. 247).

The only seated figure of Vajrapāṇi which can be assigned to the Ṭhākurī period is that which was excavated at Nalanda and is now in the National Museum, New Delhi (Fig. 205). It has generally been accepted as a Bihar bronze but that it is a Nepali work is indubitable. The face is quite distinctive and is of the same type that adorns the Śiva-liṅga of 1040 A.D. (Fig. 32). One can at once notice the differences in the physiognomy if one compares it with a typical Pāla bronze from Nalanda (Fig. 206). Moreover, the forms of both the triple-lobed crown and the flame aureole are quite distinct from those seen in Bihar bronzes. Finally, while the Pāla Mañjuśrī reveals a penchant for naturalistic modelling, the Vajrapāṇi reflects the more linear statement of form favoured by Nepali sculptors. Once again, as was apparent in the Buddha type, so also in that of the Bodhisattva, the basic form remains unchanged whether the figure is seated or standing.

VIII

The third Bodhisattva who is particularly popular in Nepal is Mañjuśrī. One of the principal Bodhisattvas, he is generally regarded as the deity of wisdom and knowledge. The Buddhists in Nepal associate him with the very origin of the valley, and the *Svayambhū Purāṇa* includes a legend that tells us how Mañjuśrī came to Nepal from China and, with his sword, cut open a gorge at Chaubar to drain the valley of excess water. Although he is thus associated with the formation of the Kathmandu valley, no image of Mañjuśrī has so far come to light that can be attributed to the Licchavi period.

The earliest inscribed image of Mañjuśrī is that still in worship in an unostentatious shrine in Kathmandu (Fig. 33), already alluded to. The inscription refers to the deity as Mañjunātha, and, paleographically, it appears to be an image of the late tenth or the early eleventh century.

The Bodhisattva is here represented as a boy of rather squat proportions and plump all around. His posture is strictly frontal, but, rather unusually, the figure is carved completely in the round and the aureole is reduced to an arch. The dhoti is beautifully designed with rich scroll patterns and is held in place by an equally sumptuous band. A separate sash encircling the waist is tied in substantial knots

behind the hands, and then falls in symmetrical folds along either side of the legs. The sacred thread forms the typical loop over the sash and then falls along the right thigh. Simple bangles and serpentine armlets adorn the arms, while the necklace is a string of pearls with several pendant medallions. The crown, ornamented with floral designs similar to that seen on the crown of a somewhat earlier Viṣṇu image (Fig. 3), is of a distinctive shape; and the hair falls in beautiful curls behind the ears. The right hand holds the ubiquitous boss, and the left very likely clasped the stem of a blue lotus that supported a manuscript, as we see in a later sculpture (Fig. 214).

Unquestionably, this type of Mañjuśrī image is unique to Nepal, and once again reflects the inventiveness of the Newari sculptors. There are two other variants of the type, both in bronze. One of these, possibly contemporary to the stone sculpture, is in a private collection in New York (Fig. 207); the other stands in the quadrangle of the Kwa bahal in Patan (Fig. 208). Because of their *contrapposto*, both figures seem somewhat more rhythmic and animated than the Kathmandu Mañjunātha. Although the plumpness and boyish faces are retained in both, the figures are slightly elongated in their proportions. Once more, minor differences in surface details make each a distinctive work of art, despite the stringency of the tradition.

The texts continuously emphasize that Mañjuśrī should be represented as a young boy (*kumāra*); in some of the descriptions he is specifically described as a sixteen year old boy.[1] Generally, in the Indian images of Mañjuśrī, although he is shown as a handsome young prince, his boyish aspect is not given the same attention as in these Nepali sculptures. Among the Bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī is clearly the Buddhist counterpart of the young Skanda-Kumāra of the Śaivas or of the child Kṛṣṇa of the Vaiṣṇavas.[2] Not only is this true conceptually and iconographically, but often also formally. For example, there is considerable formal similarity between the Gupta figure of Kārttikeya riding his father's bull (Fig. 141) and these representations of Mañjuśrī. A particular form of necklace, with medallions and tigers' claws (*vyāghra-nakha*), is common to both Mañjuśrī and Kumāra in Gupta and early medieval sculpture, particularly in Bihar. Such a necklace is prominent around the neck of one of the bronzes (Fig. 207).

In one of his special manifestations, Mañjuśrī, as Dharmaśaṅkhasamādhi, is

[1] Expressions such as *kumārarūpeṇa*, *vālākṛti*, or *kumārākāradhārīṇa* are frequently employed in the *Sādhanamālā* to describe Mañjuśrī. Cf. B. Bhattacharyya, *Sādhanamālā*, I (2nd ed.), Baroda, 1968, pp. 89, 105, 110.

[2] See, M. T. de Mallman, *Etude iconographique sur Mañjuśrī*, Paris, 1964, pp. 43, 45-6.

shown as a meditative figure seated in the posture of a yogī with his hands resting on his lap in the gesture of meditation (*samādhi*). At least two bronzes of the Ṭhākurī period represent this particular form of the Bodhisattva. One of these is in the Heeramaneck Collection (Fig. 209) and the other in the National Museum in New Delhi (Fig. 210). The only ostensible difference between such figures and those of the Tathāgata Amitābha is that the upper part of Dharmaśaṅkhasamādhi Mañjuśrī's body is draped with a garment diagonally across the left shoulder.

In the Heeramaneck bronze, the Bodhisattva is seated on a cushion above a tiered pedestal, the sides of which are decorated with floral designs similar to those seen in the twelfth century Naksal Sūrya (Fig. 34). In addition, a pair of confronted nāga figures are represented along the lowest tier of the pedestal, thereby indicating that the throne is floating above the waters, for according to the text, this form of the Bodhisattva should be invoked in the *varuṇamaṇḍala*.

More interesting from the point of view of style is the New Delhi bronze (Fig. 210). While in the abstract modelling, the designs of the garments, the lotus, and the ornaments of the crown it unquestionably reflects the Nepali tradition of the Ṭhākurī period, it has a very distinctive, bloated face that is strikingly similar to typically Kashmiri faces (Fig. 211). This is about the only instance in Nepali sculpture, with the possible exception of the Deo Patan Brahmā (Fig. 244), where a Kashmiri influence is perceptible in the physiognomy. Doubtless, Kashmiri bronzes were familiar in Nepal during this period and a sculptor may have imitated a face; but otherwise, Nepali sculpture shows no stylistic influence of the Kashmiri tradition.

IX

It is by now obvious that there was very little perceptible stylistic change over the centuries once a stereotype was established and consecrated. The type of Bodhisattva image that we first encountered in the sixth century Gana bahal Avalokiteśvara continued to be the ideal prototype for all subsequent figures of placid Bodhisattvas when they were shown standing. Except for his distinctive attributes, the vase and the effigy of the stūpa in his crown, the Maitreya in the collection of John Ford in Baltimore (Fig. 212) is fundamentally no different from other similar images (Figs. 190, 192). While the face still echoes earlier norms typified by the languid eyes, the articulately defined nose, and the somewhat pensive expression, the modelling is now considerably more mannered, although not devoid of vitality.

Basically, the same figural type is also employed to represent Vajrasattva as well

as the conventional form of Mañjuśrī (Figs. 213, 214). There is little doubt that both sculptures are the works of the same atelier and may have formed part of a larger group. Stylistically, they are closely related to the Boston Padmapāṇi (Fig. 195), although the forms are even more attenuated. The lobes of the crown are elongated further, while the *śankhapatras* behind the ears project even more prominently. The dhoti shows a different floral design, and the sash is dispensed with altogether. The thighs, thus freed from any encumbrance, appear more attractive as modelled surfaces. There is no other change in the ornamentation except for the additional anklets on the feet. The lotus of Mañjuśrī is fixed to the arm in a manner similar to the Boston Padmapāṇi, and this seems to be a trait of such sculptures of the Malla period.

Both of these sculptures, together with the Cleveland Sugatisandarśana Lokeśvara (Fig. 198), are infused with a refreshing sense of vitality. While this freshness is manifest in the Cleveland Lokeśvara in the flowing modelling of its naturalistic surfaces, in the others the outline is charged with a smooth fluidity that makes the figures exceptionally graceful. After the fifteenth century, however, the form becomes increasingly verveless, the modelling less animated and the details almost carelessly rendered, as may be seen in dated sculptures of the period.

It is manifestly clear from a study of the Buddhist sculpture that even as early as the sixth century, and despite the profound influence of the Gupta norms, the Nepali sculptors were not mechanical imitators. They were no doubt familiar with the styles prevalent in a number of artistic centres in India, such as Sarnath, Mathura, Nalanda and the rich monastic areas of Ajanta and Kanheri, but no single style seems to have been especially assertive. Rather, in creating their own Bodhisattva types, the Nepali sculptors appear to have distilled all the predominant Indian styles and evolved a distinctive local idiom. There also seems little evidence to support the view that they were unduly influenced by the styles of Bihar and Bengal of the Pāla period. Fundamentally, they continued to show a preference for a linear, compliant, and almost abstract modelling, while the Pāla sculptors reveal a far greater concern for naturalism and muscular treatment. In an occasional bronze or two after the eleventh century one may well discern influences of the Pāla or the Kashmiri style, but these are the exceptions rather than the rule.

CHAPTER SIX

FEMALE FORM AND MISCELLANEOUS SCULPTURES

A. Female Form

I

Nothing displays more blatantly the limitations of the Nepali sculptor's repertoire than his treatment of the female form. For the most part, the sculptors limited themselves to the portrayal of hieratic goddesses. There are few sumptuous yakṣīs or sensuous enchantresses beckoning at us from temple walls, as in India, for the simple reason that Nepal has no such ambitious stone monuments. Where we do meet seductive females exhibiting their physical charms from struts and supports of temple roofs, they seem less overwhelming than the Sanchi dryads, the Mathura yakṣīs, or the myriad paragons of physical beauty that crowd the walls of Khajuraho temples. Although the females of Nepali sculpture are often generously endowed, their physicality seems somewhat restrained, and certainly, there is less variety in the iconographic types than we find in any given area in India. It may be pointed out that a similar limitation in the treatment of the female form is also apparent in Kashmiri sculpture.

The most popular type of a goddess, seen almost ubiquitously in Nepal, is that represented in a bronze in the Newark Museum (Fig. 226) or in a sculpture at Banepa (Fig. 232). Despite their stylistic differences—and they may well be removed from one another by about three centuries—they share the same basic iconography and formal concepts. In both we meet with a goddess holding a lotus with the left hand, while the right displays the gesture of munificence. In addition, with her index finger and thumb, the bronze figure grasps a boss, an attribute frequently given to both male and female divinities, particularly during the first millennium A.D.

The lotus is an ubiquitous symbol of grace and beauty and may be an emblem of the Brāhmaṇical goddess of fortune, Śri-Lakṣmī or of the Buddhist saviouress, Tārā. But in Nepal it is held by many other goddesses, by Pārvatī or Umā (Figs. 133, 143), by the consort of Mañjuśrī (Fig. 40), or by Indrāṇī. Thus, unless the context is quite clear, as in the case of Viṣṇu reliefs (Figs. 3, 4, 116), an exact identification of such

isolated figures as the Newark bronze (Fig. 226) or the Banepa goddess (Fig. 232) becomes difficult. In such instances, therefore, it seems better to allude to them simply as Devī or Goddess. Devī is also a generic name for Durgā or Pārvatī, the embodiment of energy or the consort of Śiva, but it will be applied in this work only to images of goddesses that cannot be identified positively.

II

Throughout the history of Indian art, the artists have never lost sight of the fact that the primary function of a female is to bear children. While this may seem repugnant to present day social attitudes, it is nonetheless true that the wealth of a man was measured, not only by his material possessions, but also by the number of progeny he had. It was further believed that only well-formed women, generously endowed with ample, firm breasts and expansive hips, could produce a large number of healthy children. This attitude towards feminine beauty is well attested to both by Indian literature and by art.

Time and again in literature is this basic concept of a woman being a "cornucopia of vegetative abundance"[1] emphasized and reiterated.

In a charming verse, the poet Vallana writes:

> Such wealth of buttocks would slow the walk of anyone;
> the curve of your breast, sweet lass, would carry off even another's heart.
> The dark lily which serves as arrow in the hand of Love is a derivative of your eye.
> Your face is the finished image of which the moon is the first draft, bearing mark yet of erasure.[2]

Elsewhere, an unknown poet sings:

> If her plump thighs, her charming lips, her close-set breasts,
> If her face-lotus play the conquerors;
> Then killed are a pair of plantain stems,
> Killed the *bandhuka* flower;
> Destroyed are two gold jars, and broken is the moon.[3]

It is not unnatural that poets should be concerned with the fleshy charms of the female form. But even the theologians did not hesitate to describe ecstatically the physical beauty of the goddesses. A perfect individual must possess a beautiful body as well

[1] K. Clark, *The Nude*, Harmondsworth, 1960, p. 65.
[2] H. D. Ingalls, *op. cit.*, p. 172.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 167.

as a lofty mind. And how could a goddess be given a form that falls short of perfection? Every goddess, therefore, whether Hindu or Buddhist, is imagined to be a woman of sixteen years in full youthful blossom. And quite unabashedly Śaṅkārcārya, the ascetic theologian, extols Pārvatī's physical charms in no puritanical language.

> Slender by nature, wearied from the burden of overhanging breasts,
> with bent form that seems to be cracking slightly at the navel and the abdominal creases—
> ever to your waist, which no more than a tree on the trembling rim of a torrent
> has any stability, may there be safety, O daughter of the mountain.
>
> When your breasts, which had suddenly burst your bodice as
> it met their (your breasts') sweating curves,
> two golden jars, were rubbing against your armpits at his (Kāma's) forcing,
> Kāma, trying to save your waist from breaking, O Devī,
> bound it three-folded as it is, triply as with withes of the lavali creeper.
>
> The lord of the mountains, O Pārvatī, weight and width from his own
> buttocks (punningly, mountain spurs) cut off and bestowed on you as dowry;
> hence the entire earth this wide and weighty
> expanse of your buttocks conceals and outweighs.[1]

There is no room in the Indian attitude for the Platonic assertion of a celestial and a vulgar Venus,[2] and therefore, Indian artists never did try to transform the "vulgar" into the celestial. But from the "rapturous serenity of passion" and from the abundance of nature, both Indian and Nepali artists created their ideal beauty. She is an embodiment of both physical desire and that mysterious force that is the very essence of life and nature.

The intimate relationship of nature and woman is both figurative and literal. The poets have constantly employed similes borrowed directly from nature to describe the shapes and qualities of a woman. Thus, the eyes are compared with the lotus-bud, the nose with the *bandhuka* flower, the thighs with the plantain trunk, and the face with the full moon. Such comparisons may well have provided the artists with their basic schemas and very likely served as verbal sketch books. And when put together, these shapes not only provided an ideal female form, but it seems as if nature's very essence was distilled and injected into that form. The representation of a goddess remains as desirably sensuous and alluring as portrayals of lesser mortals.

[1] W. N. Brown (ed. and trans.), *The Saundaryyalaharī*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1958, pp. 79-80.
[2] Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

Just as in literature, so also in art, one finds no difference between the form of a deity and that of an earthly female. The same set of proportions was employed to portray the figure of a goddess or that of a queen, just as the iconographers applied the same canons of proportions to mortal kings and gods. For instance, there is no perceptible formal difference between the goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī and Bali's queen in the Changu Viṣṇu vikrānta relief (Fig. 3). The conceptual schema, once conceived, remained universal and was modified, as required, to portray the 'particular'. The lotus was added to distinguish Śrī-Lakṣmī, while the queen can be recognized from the context into which she is placed.

III

Some of the early female sculptures have already been discussed. The early Hāritīs (Figs. 58, 59) or the mother goddesses at Kirtipur (Fig. 215) are not only monumental in their proportions, but also have ponderous and heavy forms. These, indeed, are "cornucopias of vegetative abundance" who can barely support the weight of their ample bosoms and luxuriant hips. The emphasis is placed exclusively on these areas of the anatomy, whereas muscles or joints, the arms and the outline of the torso are treated more perfunctorily, for they are not functionally essential. The forms are thus drastically simplified, but there is a directness about the sense of physical opulence that is unquestionably reminiscent of the Mathura yakṣīs of the Kuṣāṇa period.

Although the Deo Patan and the magnificent Pashupatinath Devī[1] (Figs. 85, 216, 217) are also frontally conceived, there is a perceptible change in the modelling. The flesh is delineated with a softness that makes their form eminently tactile. The outline is defined mellifluously and the transition from one plane to the other is velvety smooth and gentle. In both instances the clinging drapery is used cleverly, not only to accentuate the swelling planes and rounded curves, but also to add a sense of movement. Nothing is superfluous, and geometric harmony is magically combined with the vital and spontaneous rhythm of nature.

Perhaps the only bronze representing a female figure that can be attributed to the

[1] The goddess is locally known as Lakṣmī, who is at times given the tortoise as her mount, particularly in Nepal. Normally, however, the tortoise is the vehicle of the river goddess, Yamunā. It is blatantly apparent that the tortoise below the Pashupatinath figure is a later addition; even the stones are different in colour. Very likely, the figure once stood beside a magnificent image of Śiva, and they may well have been the principal icons of an impressive temple of the Licchavi period. To this temple may also have belonged the several architectural fragments that are scattered around the area (Fig. 82).

Licchavi period is the Bickford Devī (Fig. 218). Basically, she is not far removed from either the Deo Patan or the Pashupatinath figure (Figs. 89, 216), especially the latter. In both, the garments emphasize the firm, round shapes rather than conceal them. Similarly porportioned, they share the same sense of amplitude and sensuous delight. If anything, the Bickford bronze is even simpler, wearing as she does a plain scarf whose presence is hardly perceptible as it carresses the torso.

The most emphatic difference between the Pashupatinath Devī and the Bickford figure is in the latter's graceful stance. The right hip is thrust outward and the left knee slightly bent so that the figure seems about to step forth from her simple base. The *déhanchement*, however, is not as luxuriant as we see in later sculptures (Fig. 229). Nevertheless, it is sufficient to accentuate the sinuous curve of the right hip and the swelling abdomen. The form is further enlivened by the rhythmic sway of the long, flowing end of the sari, which also compositionally balances the extended right arm along the seductive arc of the hip. Despite its diminutive size, the Bickford bronze attains the same sense of monumentality and physical splendour as the overpowering Pashupatinath Devī.

Fundamentally, both images are closely related to Indian sculptures of the eighth century, as for example a Tārā from Sarnath (Fig. 219) or another from Bihar (Fig. 220). At the same time, it cannot be denied that the modelling of these figures is not far different from the Bihar Durgā of A.D. 1031 (Fig. 221). Yet, if we compare their forms with those of the females in the Kwa bahal Umā-Maheśvara of A.D. 987 or the Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu of 1004 (Fig. 27, 30), it seems impossible to accept the Pashupatinath and Bickford Devīs as contemporary or later sculptures. Moreover, as we will discuss shortly, the form of the female appears to have undergone a distinct transformation in the Ṭhākurī period. Thus, an eighth century date may be attributed with reasonable certainty to both the Pashupatinath and the Bickford Devī. Formally they share the same qualities of sheer physical presence and of monumental grandeur as large seventh century sculptures, such as the Hāritī (Fig. 60), the Jalaśayana Viṣṇu (Fig. 12), or the Varāha (Fig. 92).

IV

If we look at the two females accompanying Viṣṇu in the 1004 plaque (Fig. 30) or those in the Kwa bahal relief of 987 (Fig. 27), it will be at once apparent that the fundamental concept of the female has not changed radically. The sculptors are still concerned with the basic aspects of fecundity, although the purely vegetative

abundance is no longer overwhelming. There is far greater attenuation of the form and the definition is linear rather than volumetric. This new assertiveness of the line becomes clear if we compare the figures of Umā in the sixth century Siku bahi relief (Fig. 9) with Umā and her attendants in the Rockefeller stele (Fig. 133). Although in the latter, they still remain delightful, the convex curves and the lusty volumes are now restrained and tempered by an additional linear elegance. The breasts are smaller and placed further apart; the torso is slim and attenuated; and the legs long and smooth. Without stretching the comparison too far, one may say that the difference between the females of the Ṭhākurī period and those of the earlier phase is comparable to that between the slender and fragile figures of Botticelli and the "ample nudes of antiquity".[1]

It would be impossible here to describe the numerous sculptures of the Ṭhākurī period that reflect this change from the volumetric to the linear in terms of the female form. I will illustrate only a few outstanding examples, both in bronze and stone. By far the most accomplished gilt bronze lady of the period is now in a private collection (Figs. 222, 223). As she sits gracefully in *lalitāsana*, she is a study in refinement and elegance. When viewed from the side, she offers a classical profile, and the back is alive and sensuous. Particularly refined is the treatment of details, such as the garment with its floral pattern, the stylish coiffure and her exquisitely rendered hands which performs gestures that are solft and elegant, like those of an accomplished dancer.

Equally regal but more portrait-like is a smaller bronze at Varanasi (Figs. 224, 225). The modelling is perceptively different from that of the Wiener bronze (Fig. 222), the elongation of the torso even more emphatic, while the arms are as slender as those of Pārvatī in the Arddhanārīśvara figure (Fig. 150). The ample breasts are not as smoothly modelled as in the other females of the period. Following the mode seen in an early Hāritī (Fig. 59), they seem to be grafted to the torso rather than appear as organic outgrowths. What is distinctive about this little bronze, however, is the treatment of the lady's back (Fig. 225). Even a cursory comparison with other figures (Fig. 223) will reveal the difference. In an uncharacteristic display of naturalistic flair, the sculptor has not only delineated the depression along the spinal column, but also differentiated the subtle though uneven planes of the buttocks. The back appears to be that of an individual person, pulsating with sensual vitality and arousing in us natural desires. The artfully rendered end of the shawl flows down like a stream and, therefore, adds to the animation of the delicately modelled surface.

[1] Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

Contained within an ideal structure, her form is enveloped with a warmth that is essentially human.

I have elsewhere suggested that very likely the Varanasi figure portrays a royal donor.[1] This is apparent not only from the greater naturalism of her form, but also from her posture and the gesture of her hands. She appears to have held a tray of some kind, probably with floral offerings, and may have formed part of a more complex group of sculptures. The gesture, otherwise, is uncommon for a deity for it definitely expresses a sense of humility inappropriate for a goddess.

Generally, the sculptors seem to have favoured two basic types of female figures. Either they portrayed the female in hieratic poses (Figs. 85, 215, 228) or in pronounced *déhanchement* (Figs. 226, 227, 229). The figures differ from one another only in the delineation of surface details, or at times in the application of different canons of proportions; but, otherwise, the same basic concept of form persists almost unchanged until the fifteenth century. If seated, the posture known as *lalitāsana*, where one leg is pendant and the other is folded parallel to the plane of the seat, is applied almost ubiquitously. But even if demands of a rigid religious tradition discouraged inventiveness, often a sculpture or a bronze is executed with consummate artistry, reflecting the continued vigour of the aesthetic tradition.

V

The frontal pose for the goddess is continued even when she is portrayed with many arms and surrounded by attendants. In an unusual stele of the Ṭhākurī period the goddess is represented as Bacchaleśvarī or Vatsaleśvarī[2] (Fig. 234). Basically, the composition of the relief follows the hieratic scheme evolved for the stereotyped Umā-Maheśvara representations. The mountainous locale, here perhaps representing the Vindhyas, a favourite abode of Durgā, shows typical designs of stylized rockery. The four attendant figures, each with four arms, are arrayed symmetrically around the central goddess, who is necessarily of larger proportions. In terms of modelling, the figure of Bacchaleśvarī seemingly continues the volumetric treatment that we noticed in the Pashupatinath Devī (Fig. 216), although very likely it is a later work.

Such elaborate composition for an image of a goddess is rarely seen in Nepali

[1] P. Pal, "Some Nepali Bronzes in Bharat Kala Bhavan" in *Chhavi*, Banaras, 1971, pp. 82 ff.

[2] In the *Nepalāmāhātmya* of the *Skanda Purāṇa* Śiva tells Pārvatī that because she will reside in Mrigasthali by the affection (*vātsalya*) of the god, she will be known in the future as Vatsalā. *mama vātsalyato yasmāt sthātumicchasi pārvatī / tasmāt te vatsalā nāma bhaviṣyati varānane* // I, 39.

sculpture. Generally the goddess is represented along with her male partner and even where the latter is multi-armed, she is portrayed in a normal fashion. Although sculptures depicting the heroic form of Durgā became relatively common during the age of the Mallas, such imagery of energy will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

By far the most attractive female forms of the Malla period are visible on wooden struts in the Uku bahal at Patan (Figs. 235, 236). Each strut is sumptuously carved into a tree-dryad motif, thereby continuing with remarkable tenacity a tradition that began its life at Bharhut and Sanchi roughly fifteen hundred years earlier. In contrast to the weighty and ponderous Sanchi yakṣīs, however, the thirteenth century Nepali versions are slender and elegant. The modelling of their forms is remarkably soft but sensuous, and the suggestion of movement flows across the surface of the torso and the thighs. The Sanskrit poets were inordinately fond of comparing the female form with the swaying and bending creeper or vine, and the unknown masters who created the Uku bahal struts seem to have been more than aware of such similes.

That these charming females are yakṣīs or tree-dryads is evident from the fact that some of them hold branches, while others stand on crouching grotesques. Imbibing the endless and spontaneous rhythm of nature, the tree-dryads were among the most popular motives in early Indian art. Later, even when they were replaced on medieval temple walls by celestial nymphs or mortal enchantresses, the sculptors viewed them essentially as desirable female forms. Indeed, desirability is the most obvious quality of the Nepali yakṣīs, as they peer down at us elusively from the shadows of the projecting eaves. As the yakṣīs strike their provocative postures, stretching their arms over their heads or along their sides, they reveal their physical charms with an uninhibited candor. It is obvious that neither the sculptor nor the beholder was constrained by an over-riding sense of false modesty. Each figure is a beautiful shape by itself, despite the thematic repetition; and each figure combines harmoniously ample form with linear grace.

The same sense of rhythmic movement and full modelling are at times apparent in hieratic images of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as in two bronzes portraying Vasudhārā (Figs. 39, 237). Each of her six hands displays an attribute that proclaims her function as a goddess of fertility and abundance. Primarily the Buddhist counterpart of the Brāhmaṇical deity of fortune, Śrī-Lakṣmī, Vasudhārā is also the dispenser of wisdom, symbolized by the manuscript in one of her left hands. Despite the additional arms, which are skillfully disposed so that their outline forms a lively mandala, she is basically the same figure that we encountered in the beautiful Devī of the eleventh century (Fig. 226). The most significant differences are a greater

love for ornamentation, a certain manneristic rigidity in the modelling and a distinctive shape of the face and its features that are unquestionably characteristic of the Malla period.

The fifteenth century was particularly propitious in Nepali history for more than half of it was spanned by the remarkably stable reign of Yakṣamalla (1428-1480). The material prosperity enjoyed by the society, due largely to the flourishing condition of trade with Tibet, must have been especially beneficial for the artistic community. A number of bronzes, particularly Buddhist and revealing the same qualities that characterize the Vasudhārā images, may with reasonable certainty, be attributed to this period (Figs. 238, 239). Stylistically, they are comparable to the Jhaṅkeśvarī of A.D. 1407 (Fig. 36), dedicated some twenty years before the accession of Yakṣamalla.

The progressive increase in ornateness is nowhere more apparent than in two charming bronzes now in the Boston Museum (Figs. 240-242). One of these portrays Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning, and the other the Buddhist goddess known as Ṣaḍakṣarī Mahāvidyā (Fig. 242). Both figures are basically of the same type as those which we have attributed to the time of Yakṣamalla, but the baroque exuberance of the intricate aureoles enhances their ornamental qualities. Although such ornate aureoles begin to appear much earlier (Figs. 110, 135), these are considerably more restrained in their visual effect. In the Boston bronzes, however, the aureoles seem to overwhelm and engulf the figures, as the lotus stems and leaves, or whirling tails of *makaras*, swirl around them with great flourish. The effect is less overpowering in the figure of Sarasvatī because of the recurring areas of voids immediately around the figure as well as around the convoluting plants. These voids also create a sort of chiaroscuro that makes the design appear more crisp and animated.

If in comparison to the exuberance of the background, the figures in the Boston bronzes seem to have lost some of their importance, the bodies themselves are not unduly encumbered with ornaments, as is also apparent in the Cleveland Prajñāpāramitā (Fig. 239). But more often than not from about the fifteenth century (Figs. 39, 40) females no longer display sumptuously endowed bodies of physical satisfaction. Even those areas of the anatomy that have always retained their preeminence as symbols of vegetative abundance, such as the breasts and the hips, are now devoid of substance or sensuality. And finally, in such repoussé works, as in the figure of Ekajaṭā (Fig. 243), ornamentation almost totally overwhelms the body of desire. She appears interesting only because of her grotesque form, once again a contribution of tāntric imagery. But otherwise, to rephrase Kenneth Clark, the artis-

tic vitality of the tradition has finally abandoned the human body to find a new home in ornament.

B. Miscellaneous Sculptures

VI

Brahmā

It is rather curious that the third member of the Brāhmaṇical triad, Brahmā, should have lost his *de facto* eminence even before the rise of the two principal sects that evolved around Viṣṇu and Śiva. As in India, in Nepal also, Brahmā remained more or less a figure-head, and no cult seems to have grown around him. Indeed, only three sculptures of any antiquity or aesthetic merit have so far been found in Nepal, and at least two of these may once have been enshrined as cult objects.

Of these I have already discussed the impressive sixth century image at Chapagaon (Fig. 11). Both in its monumentality and majestic splendour, it remains a major sculpture of the Licchavi period. Its strict frontality is emphasized by the orientation of the two additional heads which are represented in a manner that was popular with Kuṣāṇa sculptors. As also in Kuṣāṇa sculptures, the figure has a physical presence, both in its proportions and scale, and emanates a surging sense of vital but disciplined energy. It may further be pointed out that the Chapagaon Brahmā is remarkably close to the Bihar Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu (Fig. 112). Especially similar are the donor figures in the Nepali stele and the male donor in the Viṣṇu sculpture.

If we now look at the two other examples from Deo Patan and Mrigasthali (Figs. 244, 245), it will be apparent that there is a significant change in the concept of form. The Deo Patan Brahmā is carved fully in the round and was very likely circumambulated by the devotees. This is quite apparent from the orientation of the side heads which are now disposed facing each cardinal direction. His posture is more naturalistic as he sits firmly on top of the lotus. It is further evident that both for the Deo Patan and the Mrigasthali Brahmās, the sculptors have employed totally different canons of proportions than those applied to the Chapagaon Brahmā. Much of the weightiness and volumetric concept of form is now replaced by a smooth and linear definition. The muscle-bound body has become somewhat more placid and free of any physical tension, as is expected of a perfect yogī. Indeed, the arms or the legs appear literally to echo the shapes of the tender banana trunk or the elephant calf's trunk, and there seems no evidence of any framework of bones supporting the flesh.

The Deo Patan Brahmā (Fig. 244) may immediately be related to the Los Angeles Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu or to the Sankhu Umā-Maheśvara (Figs. 108, 130). That it is a later sculpture than the Chapagaon Brahmā is evident. The design of the chignon on each head no doubt continues in every detail the hair design of the ekamukhaliṅga (Fig. 121), but neither in the shape nor in the articulation of the features are they similar. The heavy sash around the waist is of the same variety as that seen in the images of sleeping Viṣṇu (Fig. 12) or of the Sankhu Umā-Maheśvara. Indeed, the remarkable stylistic resemblance between the latter and the Deo Patan Brahmā almost certainly indicates that they are contemporary works.

The Mrigasthali Brahmā (Fig. 245), carved in rather high relief, is a more elaborate sculpture. Brahmā now has two additional arms; the rosary is held by the upper right hand, and the damaged lower right must once have displayed the gesture of munificence. The lower left hand still grasps the waterpot, while the upper right holds a manuscript. The manuscript no doubt symbolizes the *Vedas*, and all the other attributes are similarly appropriate for an ideal brahmin. Both the sacred thread and the antelope skin, flung across his left shoulder, together with his chignon, emphasize his ascetic character. The antelope skin, it may be pointed out, is not present in the Deo Patan Brahmā.

Although here also Brahmā continues to sit on the lotus, behind him the sculptor has carved out a cave of typical Nepali rock formations with wavy crests like those seen in the Rockefeller Umā-Mehaśvara (Fig. 133). Moreover, on his right are two bearded and emaciated sages, each holding waterpots and evidently adoring Brahmā. Very likely there were two more such figures on the other side of the god. Thus, the scene seems to represent a mountain hermitage and is reminiscent of the magnificent relief of Brahmā that once adorned the Huccimalligudi temple at Aihole.[1] The two emaciated figures are about the only known examples of sages represented in Nepali art, except for a repoussé figure of Mārkaṇḍeya on a manuscript cover (Fig. 41). All the delineations are stylized; nonetheless, they are convincing typological portrayals of wandering sages of a type that may still be seen in India and Nepal today.

VII

Indra

Like Brahmā the pre-eminent Vedic god, Indra, the lord of the thunderbolt, also lost his importance in the later Brāhmaṇical religion. From the supreme deity of the Aryans, he was reduced to the status of a guardian figure presiding over the eastern

[1] Stella Kramrisch, *The Art of India*, 3rd ed., London, 1965, Pl. 63.

quadrant. But as a guardian deity, he was equally venerated by both Hindus and Buddhists. In Nepal, however, Indra remained rather an important divinity, and a special festival is held in his honour every year. This is known as the *Indra-yātrā*, when portable images of Indra are brought out in great quantity and carried around in procession.

Two such sculptures in bronze are illustrated here and both belong to the Malla period (Figs. 42, 246). Images of Indra in stone are rare, the majority being cast in metal or carved in wood. The two gilt-bronze examples discussed here are typical, and many such sculptures may be seen in Nepal and in collections outside the country.

Except for the disposition of the right arm, both sculptures are remarkably similar. The god is shown seated in a posture stereotyped for princes and known as *mahārāja-līlā* or royal ease. Both his posture and his elaborate jewellery, along with the characteristic crown, are indicative of his regal status as king of the gods. His principal attribute is the thunderbolt, which is placed on a lotus held by his left hand. In addition, across his forehead is delineated the third eye, rendered horizontally to distinguish it from the vertical third eye of Śiva. Indra is described in Vedic texts as the god with the thousand eyes (*sahasrākṣa*), and the horizontal third eye is no doubt symbolic of the additional eyes. In the Boston bronze (Fig. 42) his right arm is fully stretched and rests against his knee. In the Los Angeles example (Fig. 246), the right hand is raised near the chest, and as it holds a flower, it displays the gesture of exposition. The flower here very likely represents the idea of a prince seated in court holding a sort of nosegay or *līlākamala*.

This type of Indra image seems peculiar to Nepal, and no similar example is known from India. Although the basic type of a princely figure seated in *mahārājalīla* has been sparingly employed to represent other deities, such as Siṁhanāda Avalokiteśvara (Fig. 222) and special forms of Mañjuśrī, only in Nepal is the type so extensively used to portray Indra. Apart from the posture, two other features peculiar to the Nepali Indra deserve our attention. The distinctive shape of the crown occurs only once in Gandhāra[1]; otherwise, it seems characteristic of Indra figures in Nepal. Secondly, the manner of representing the thunderbolt on a lotus (*padmastha āyūdha*) is not characteristic of Brāhmaṇical images, but is more common to Buddhist figures. Such iconographic transfers are, of course, a familiar feature of Nepali art.

An interesting instance of such an obvious borrowing occurs in a much earlier image of Indra in a private collection (Fig. 247). To all intents and purposes, there is

[1] I. Lyons and H. Ingholt, *Gandhāran Art in Pakistan*. New York, 1957, Fig. 502.

little or no difference between this figure and images of Vajrapāṇi that we have already encountered (Figs. 14, 202, 203). However, that this particular figure portrays Indra is clearly indicated by the horizontal third eye delineated across the forehead. It must be remembered that, both conceptually and iconographically, there is no significant difference between Vajrapāṇi, the thunderbolt-bearer, and Indra, the thunderbolt-wielder. Hence, there was nothing incompatible with such a transfer, although it must have been rather confusing at times. In general, the type of Indra image favoured in Nepal is that of the relaxed prince, but when exactly the form was invented is difficult to determine. Very likely it is a creation of the post-Licchavi period, for no image has yet been found that is earlier than the tenth century.

VIII

Kārttikeya

Kārttikeya, the son of Śiva and Pārvatī, is primarily a god of war in Indian mythology. A popular deity during the Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods, like many other gods Kārttikeya is an amalgam of diverse traits and personalities. Known also as Kumāra or Skanda, he is in fact a child hero like the boy Kṛṣṇa, and generally, the Nepali sculptors have emphasized this boyish rather than martial aspect of the deity.

Some of the most delightful representations of Kārttikeya may be seen in the Umā-Maheśvara reliefs (Figs. 129, 132-133). He is portrayed as a plump boy, with a bloated belly and with his hair tied in a topknot, either seated formally or standing beside his peacock. Elsewhere he is engaged in playing with his father's bull, Nandi, or in riding his own mount, a peacock. Occasionally the presence of a lance in his hand reminds us of his martial character, but his boyishness is always emphasized; and if we compare him with the child Kṛṣṇa (Fig. 90), it becomes evident that the sculptors have employed the same conceptual schema to portray both children.

In a typical icon Kārttikeya stands formally on a pedestal in slight *tribhaṅga*, his left hand holding the spear (Fig. 248). On either side are two kneeling devotees, and while the pedestal is decorated with a meandering floral design, the edge of the aureole is ornamented with inverted comma-shaped flame motif. Once again the boyishness of Kārttikeya is accentuated in terms of both proportions and rotundity. His ears have distinctive ornaments consisting of bells, and perhaps this is why the figure is locally identified as Ghaṇṭākarṇa. In literature Ghaṇṭākarṇa (bell-ears) appears as an attendant of Kārttikeya, and if this figure does represent Ghaṇṭākarṇa, then unquestionably he has been given the same form as Kārttikeya. The remarkable similar-

ity of this image and the Naksal Sūrya of the twelfth century is obvious (Fig. 34). The inclusion of the two kneeling devotees must be attributed to Buddhist influences. Frequently such adoring females are seen in steles representing the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Figs. 187-188, 191).

Perhaps, the most astonishing representation of Kārttikeya in Nepal is that at Harigaon (Fig. 249), where we see the god in full martial regalia.[1] Equipped with his six heads and six pairs of arms, he stradles a garuḍa exactly as Viṣṇu does (Fig. 108). As this is such an unusual image, it would be worthwhile here to discuss the iconography at some length.

First of all, Kārttikeya is the only Brāhmaṇical god who is clearly given six heads. The story is told that after his birth he was abandoned, just as Moses was, in a bed of reeds and discovered there by the six Kṛttikās. As all his foster mothers began to quarrel as to who should feed him first, Kārttikeya solved the problem by growing six heads at once. The story was no doubt invented to rationalize his six heads, for in point of fact Kārttikeya is a combination of several deities, such as Kumāra, Skanda, Mahāsena, et al, who were probably all different originally. Each head along with a pair of hands, therefore, very likely symbolizes one of these identities.

We are told in the *Matsya Purāṇa*[2] that soon after his birth Kārttikeya was fully equipped with various weapons by the other gods in order to make him invincible against the menacing demons. Thus, in addition to his own spear, which he holds with his principal left hand, the seated god in the image also has the trident of Śiva, the banner of Vāyu, the noose of Varuṇa, the wheel of Viṣṇu, the thunderbolt of Indra, etc. Although the *Matsya Purāṇa* tells us that his mount was the peacock, perhaps the sculptor felt that the Garuḍa would be a more suitable vehicle for a battle than a peacock.[3] The flames behind Kārttikeya no doubt symbolize Agni's power, who is at times regarded as Kārttikeya's father. That the relief represents the moment when Kārttikeya is about to set forth for the battle is evident, not only from his martial attributes, but also from the poised posture of his mount. In addition, the

[1] This sculpture was first discussed by Mary Slusser at a symposium in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in October, 1970.

[2] *The Matsya Purāṇam*, II, p. 114.

[3] In the *Śiva Purāṇa*, however, we are told that Garuḍa gave Kārttikeya his own son Citrabarhana, while the powerful cock was given to him by Aruṇa. Thus, the garuḍa he rides here is very likely Citrabarhana (J. L. Shastri (ed.), *Śiva-Purāṇa*, 2, p. 736). It may be added that the frescoes adorning the walls of the Bagh-Bhairava temple at Kirtipur also seem to be based on the *Śiva-Purāṇa*. In addition there is a vivid description in the *Śiva-Purāṇa* of the coronation of the young Kārttikeya, and one of the reliefs within the temple of Paśupatinātha portrays the occasion in a graphic manner.

sculptor has added four other figures on either side of the lotus who definitely strike aggressive poses. Two of them are Varāha and Gaṇeśa, while the other two are probably Kārttikeya's companions. According to the text, all his acolytes as well as other deities marched with him to the battlefield.

To my knowledge no relief in India has yet been discovered that represents the incident with such telling expressiveness. Once again a Nepali sculptor reveals a distinct flair for inventiveness and has given us a graphic portrayal of the commander of the gods. Stylistically, the relief is no doubt related to the Los Angeles Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu (Fig. 108), although, because of the fiery background, the Kārttikeya stele appears more flamboyant. Basically, the artist has employed the same figure as Viṣṇu, but has not overlooked the fact that Kārttikeya is only a boy. And like the placid child Kṛṣṇa about to destroy the demon Kālīya, the young hero Karttikeya is serenely confident as he rides into battle.

IX

Nāgarāja

Two early and imposing images of Nāgarāja, the king of the serpents, which I have already discussed (Figs. 67, 69), clearly indicate both the popularity and antiquity of his cult. This is also corroborated by tradition and by the general veneration for serpents in the valley. The idea of a personified serpent king, known as Vāsuki, is very ancient in Brāhmaṇical lore. Some of the most impressive sculptures of nāga monarchs with an imperious bearing were created at Mathura during the Kuṣāṇa period. Both in terms of monumentality and physical grandeur, the two early Nepali figures, although seated, are no less impressive.

The type of Nāgarāja or Vāsuki, as seen in the Kumbheśvara temple example (Fig. 67), remained the prototype for countless later copies. The image in the Tukan bahal at Kathmandu (Fig. 250), probably of the Ṭhākurī period, is only stylistically different from the earlier figure. The posture is equally imperious and the serpent's intertwined body, which now frames the figure elegantly, is just as impressive as the nāgas in Licchavi sculpture. Only the form of the king's figure has changed, the heaviness being eschewed for more flowing modelling and attenuated proportions. In a more elaborate version (Fig. 251) Nāgarāja carries a child, probably his son, on his lap and is flanked by two attendants, both carrying flywhisks. No doubt the composition is borrowed from the more familar Buddhist triads (Fig. 182), but no such group including a child occurs in Indian sculpture.

More subtle and gentle is a charming portrayal of a serpent monarch, probably of

the late Licchavi period, now fixed to the base of the Cha bahil (Fig. 252). The fragment no doubt once formed part of a larger relief, and in the Buddhist context, the figure may represent Mucalinda, although, both iconographically and conceptually, he is no different from Vāsuki of the Brāhmaṇical pantheon. The king is seated with his legs crossed on a cushion of convoluting coils, the seven serpent hoods forming a canopy above the regal head. Rather than reflect an attitude of adoration, his hands appear to display the gesture of exposition so that the king may have been engrossed in conversation with another person. The rocky background of the relief has been hollowed out in such a fashion that, not only does the figure appear to be ensconced in a cave, but also visually it creates a greater illusion of depth. Such realism is rather unusual for Nepali sculpture and reminds us of the famous Ellora panel where Śiva and Pārvatī are engaged in playing dice. There, too, the sculptor has achieved a similar illusionary effect by hollowing out the background behind the figures.

A similar feeling of imperiousness combined with poised serenity characterizes a small bronze in the John Ford collection (Fig. 254). Here the king is obviously making an offering as he holds a plate of sweets in his left hand. Very likely this, too, is a figure of Mucalinda, and it may have formed part of a more elaborate composition. The five hoods provide a canopy and an oval aureole, enriched with the ubiquitous flame design, forms an attractive frame for the figure.

The convoluting coils of the serpent, as in many earlier instances, are rendered sensitively, proclaiming both the strength and the elusivenss of the reptile. In contrast, the elegantly proportioned king sits calmly and with dignity, his inner spiritual strength triumphing over brute force. Although diminutive because of its powerful modelling, the sculpture creates an illusion of monumentality. The direct formal relationship of this figure with the Cha bahil Nāgarāja (Fig. 252) is obvious, and once again we see the remarkable tenacity of the tradition. While the modelling is equally flowing and the form flawlessly smooth, a greater linearism makes the Ford bronze somewhat more manneristic. Indeed, while the Chabahil Nāgarāja is similar to the Bodhisattvas of the Dhvaka baha caitya (Fifs. 13, 14), the bronze figure is stylistically more closely related to the elventh century mukhaliṅga (Fig. 32).

Impressive as these two representations of Nāgarāja are, they conform to a conventional formula that had become a well-established part of the sculptor's repertoire already by the Ṭhākurī period. In contrast, a second bronze, richly gilded, and also in the collection of John Ford, offers us a refreshing variation (Fig. 254). Here we see a supplicant *nāga* offering himself in ecstatic joy. Again the posture as well as the gesture derive from much earlier prototypes, seen in Indian Gupta reliefs, and in

Nepal in the Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu stele (Fig. 113). But the dynamic movement and vigorous rhythm inherent in the almost violent twist of the body gain added emphasis in the bronze because the figure is conceived fully in the round.

Few other sculptures of the Malla period reflect the continued creative spirit of the Newari sculptors as convincingly as this Nāgarāja. Stylistically, it is comparable to the early fifteenth century Bodhisattvas in Cleveland and the British Museum (Figs. 213, 214). But in the Nāgarāja the ethnic character is more visible in the facial features with their large bulging eyes, the distinctive nose and rather small compressed mouth. The unknown sculptor has envisioned his serpent king as an ardent devotee who offers himself in complete self-abandon. The graceful gesture of supplication as well as the rhythmic swing of the torso convey his rapturous earnestness with telling immediacy. Purely from a formal viewpoint, the bronze is a study in spontaneous movement, and reveals the sculptor's complete understanding of the underlying pattern of inherent energy. Suspended in perfect equilibrium, the figure at once embodies physical virility and spiritual ecstasy. There is no emphasis on the mechanism of the body, on sinews of muscles, and yet the form is full and lively. Among the hundreds of bronzes surviving from this period which usually portray hieratic subjects in a conventional manner, this statuette of the serpent devotee offers a refreshing diversion.

X

Sūrya

Although epigraphical evidence attests to the worship of Sūrya, the sun god, in Licchavi Nepal, no images of the deity can be attributed to that period. Statues of Sūrya begin to appear in profusion from the Thākurī period, and interestingly four of them are dated. Of the four, the two Patan examples bear dates corresponding to A.D. 1065 and 1083 (Figs. 28, 29); that from Naksal was consecrated in the year 1159 (Fig. 34); while the Banepa Sūrya is a work of 1394 (Fig. 35).

The two Patan Sūryas are so alike that they must be the products of the same atelier, if they were not carved by the same hands. I have elsewhere[1] discussed the iconography of these two sculptures at length, but a few salient features may bear repetition. In both reliefs the composition is dominated by the hieratic and larger figure of Sūrya in the centre, flanked by his two acolytes, Daṇḍī and Piṅgala, who are smaller because of their lesser importance. As is also usual in such compositions, the central figure stands firm and erect, while the attendants sway gently to one side.

[1] See P. Pal and D. C. Bhattacharyya, *The Astral Divinities of Nepal*, Varanasi, 1968, pp. 10ff.

Unlike the more standard steles of the period, however, the pedestal and the aureole are left relatively plain, although in the Saugal example (Fig. 29) a rocky surface is artfully indicated by shallow incisions. Indeed, the two sculptures are so similar that it seems very likely that the donor of the later image was so impressed with the earlier sculpture (Fig. 28) that he simply had it copied. The differences between the two steles occur only in matters of minutiae, and their stylistic relationship parallels that between the Tilganga and Lajimpat Viṣṇu vikrānta reliefs of the fifth century (Figs. 1, 2).

The virtuosity of the Nepali sculptors has already become apparent throughout this work, and it is clear that Indian iconographic descriptions are often inadequate to explain Nepali works. This is especially true of the Ṭhākurī period, and during the days of the Mallas, the Newaris were particularly inventive in devising new iconic types. It is also evident that, although secluded in their Himalayan isolation, the artists were remarkably receptive to new ideas and often appear to have been familar with styles and traditions as far south as the Deccan. For instance, it was customary in North India to depict Sūrya invariably in the Scythian attire, consisting of a coat of mail and boots, but in the south the more Indian mode, where Sūrya wears a dhoti, was favoured. It is obvious that the sculptor of the two Patan images has followed the South Indian tradition, but at the same time, it must be stressed that the form of the attendants seems to be peculiar to Nepal.

This penchant for constant innovation or deviation is also apparent in the Naksal Sūrya (Fig. 34). Basically, Sūrya is dressed in the Śaka or Scythian mode—and the local people refer to the image as Śāka Sūrya—with a double-breasted jacket, open at the neck, and high boots. The jacket very likely perpetuates a type that was in fashion in the valley at the time. But even more interesting is the portrayal of the two adoring females kneeling at the feet of the god. Here again is yet another sculptor who dispensed with the more conventional iconography and borrowed both the figurative types, as well as the manner of their depiction from Bodhisattva images (Figs. 188, 191). The ornate design of the aureole is even bolder than the Yampi baha relief, while the two cherubic celestial children, adoring the god on either side of the crowned head, recall the devaputras hovering in the clouds in the Nativity stele (Fig. 87). The most arresting feature of the representation, however, is the face of Sūrya, which attains a curious expression because of the large, bulging eyes.

In a study of a traditional art form, where a sculpture is primarily a religious symbol whose immutability is believed to enhance its intrinsic value, one must never lose sight of the necessity and importance of conceptualization. Types and stereo-

types, therefore, recur with astonishing persistence over centuries; and stylistic changes are affected more in matters of detail than in the formal language. A brief comparison between the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattvas of the Licchavi period (Figs. 13, 14) and the attendants in the two eleventh century Patan Sūryas (Figs. 28, 29) will make this abundantly clear. There is little doubt that the same type of figure that was used by the Licchavi artist to portray the Bodhisattvas is here employed to represent the acolytes, even continuing such details as the design of the armlets, the earrings and the garment. Although separated by more than three centuries, the same formal concept is still predominant. One may well wonder if three hundred years produced any tangible stylistic changes that may be effectively verbalized.

Perhaps the most striking difference lies in the fact that in contrast to the immanent vitality of the form in the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattvas, the modelling in Sūrya's attendants seems positively more mannered. The sense of rhythmic flow of movement is intrinsic to the form of the Bodhisattvas and is further accentuated by the swaying sash, the pleats of the garment, as well as the sinuous lotus stalk. In Sūrya's acolytes, however, despite the flexion of their bodies, a certain rigidity is apparent, whether in the treatment of the plastic masses or in the delineation of the appendages. The pleats of the garments appear merely as a design element and add little animation to the forms, while the disposition of the arms seems more contrived and is characterized by sharp and intrusive angles where they bend. Such differences, nevertheless, do not necessarily indicate any lack of skill or power of observation, but are the result of an endless process of using the same formula and idiom, and inevitably leads to formal fatigue in the style.

In the Banepa Sūrya (Fig. 35) we encounter, not only a totally different iconic type, but also a varied configuration. Although the representation is again frontal, the composition is livelier because of the greater narrative intent of the subject. The sun-god is in the sky riding his chariot drawn by seven horses and driven by his charioteer Aruṇa, who is a half-brother of Garuḍa. Sūrya is accompanied by two militant females, Uṣā and Pratyūṣā, who are allegories of dawn and pre-dawn, and who are engaged in shooting arrows at the demons of darkness, represented in flight below the chariot. This mode of portraying Sūrya was fairly common in North India, but a glance at a standard example from Pāla Bihar (Fig. 255) will clearly establish the stylistic difference between Nepali sculpture and the Pāla tradition. Moreover, in Nepal the same compositional arrangement and iconographic configuration are employed to represent Candra, the moon-god, the only difference being that the horses are replaced by geese.

During the Malla period the Newari sculptors created a wide variety of icons portraying the planetary deities, and these have been discussed elsewhere.[1] They are interesting more for their iconography than for their aesthetic qualities. Among the representations of the nine planets or the *navagraha*, the finest are those at Bhadgaon, probably of the period of Yakṣamalla (Figs. 256-257). Portrayed as handsome busts, they adorn the side of a bathing fountain. Especially charming are the delineations of Rāhu and Ketu, in which the Newari flair for design and fantasy finds vivid expression.

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 21ff.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NARRATIVE RELIEFS AND IMAGES OF ENERGY

A. Narrative Reliefs

I

It must already have become apparent to the reader that, although the subject matter for a sculpture was drawn often from the rich source of Purāṇic mythology, few sculptures or reliefs in Nepal reveal a narrative intent. The history of art in India virtually begins with the Buddhists making profitable use of narrative sculpture to spread their doctrine. By the Gupta period this interest in depicting didactic tales seems to have declined, and in sculpture the Indian Buddhists limited the repertoire to the eight great miracles from the life of the Buddha (Fig. 20). The mode of narration in these compositions is synoptic, almost to the point of being symbolic. Each incident is reduced to the bare essentials necessary to comprehend the theme; and often the time element is totally ignored while two or three successive incidents are juxtaposed in one given composition.

This mode of synoptic and overlapping narration was also effectively employed by the Nepali sculptors in the Viṣṇu vikrānta reliefs (Fig. 1-4), which I have already discussed. Several successive events are compressed cleverly into one and the same composition, and, as we watch Bali making the gift to Vāmana, almost in a visual overlap the dwarf becomes a cosmic giant. Mostly in Vaiṣṇava sculptures do we see such a curious combination of hieraticism and narrative intent. Such sculptures had to serve as didactic imagery as well as a ritual icon—a problem that was solved rather effectively by the artists.

Early Buddhist art in Nepal seems to have attached more importance to the stūpa than the Buddha himself. No doubt some of the many monasteries, which we know were in a flourishing condition, had their walls covered with murals depicting the life of the Buddha and other edificatory tales. But in sculpture only a few reliefs representing narrative themes remain today, and these (Figs. 87, 177-180), as we have already seen, are somewhat perfunctory and hieratic without much psychological interest. Moreover, like the Vaiṣṇava reliefs, these also served as icons rather

than as decorative friezes meant both to embellish a shrine and to carry a didactic message. The remaining architectural sections of early Buddhist monuments (Figs. 158-161) are too fragmentary and simply portray devotees kneeling by themselves or flanking religious symbols. Their supple forms are delineated as masterly embodiments of physical grace and spiritual devotion, but removed from their context they remain only isolated objects.

II

Among the most remarkable narrative friezes in the country are those that are scattered around the Kathesimbhu area of Kathmandu (Figs. 258-262). The subject of these reliefs has been identified by N. R. Banerjee as Pārvatī's penance as described by Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhava*.[1] For several reasons the suggestion appears to be far-fetched, although the Śaiva character of the fragments is unquestionable. Significantly all the scenes are invariably portrayed against a mountainous background. Of all the myths, either Buddhist or Brāhmaṇical, only the romantic story of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī is best suited to such a setting, for both of them are constantly associated with mountains.

The fact remains, however, that only by misinterpreting Kālidāsa's verses can one identify the reliefs as representing scenes from his *Kumārasambhava*. Banerjee has suggested a fifth-sixth century date for the reliefs and has presumed Kālidāsa to have flourished in the fourth century; both statements are conjectural. Secondly, it is doubtful if there was at all a tradition, either in Nepal or in India, to decorate a temple wall with themes from a secular work. More specifically, I will discuss three reliefs along with Kālidāsa's text to show that even if the scenes do relate to the story of the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, they have little to do with the poetical version.

The relief most difficult to interpret in the light of Kālidāsa, or any other purāṇic version of the theme, is that in which a couple, along with a child, appears to be kneeling with offerings of flowers (Fig. 258). Recognizing that the two adults are in a submissive attitude, Banerjee makes the untenable suggestion that here Śiva and Pārvatī, jubilant at the birth of their son, are expressing their gratitude to the "Supreme Being". In support of this he quotes two verses from canto XI of *Kumārasambhava*,[2] although many scholars doubt whether the poet composed more than

[1] N. R. Banerjee, "Parvati's Penance as Revealed by the Eloquent Stones of Nepal", *Ancient Nepal*, 2, pp. 27ff.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

eight cantos. Moreover, while in the two verses quoted by Banerjee there is nothing to indicate that the grateful parents are making offerings to a Supreme Being, such an interpretation shows a complete misunderstanding of Kālidāsa, for whom Śiva himself was the Supreme Being.

A definite identification of the scene, however, remains elusive. Just as Banerjee's suggestion seems improbable, so too is Kramrisch's identification that they are pilgrims in the mountains.[1] All that can be said for the present is that they do seem to be engaged in gathering flowers. The relief belongs with the others, and the little boy with his peacock very likely is Kārttikeya.

A second relief (Fig. 259) shows a small boy with curly locks cascading down his shoulders and with flowers in both hands, approaching a kneeling figure. The boy also wears a dhoti as well as some sort of ivy-like garland, a locket and earrings. A small deer looks up at him; and the kneeling figure, whose head is missing, seems to be turning towards the boy. Banerjee interprets the scene as that where Śiva, disguised as a young and attractive *brahmacārin*, comes to test the earnestness of Pārvatī's penance and fidelity. Certainly Śiva did not appear as a child with flowers in his hands, and it is difficult to see why the artist would portray him as a boy, when the poet describes him as a young ascetic. Moreover, the proportions as well as the modelling of the kneeling figure, especially of the muscular thighs, and the lack of any breasts almost definitely indicate that the figure is that of a man. The scene, therefore, could well represent Śiva playing with the young Kumāra, or perhaps even with Vīrabhadra, the favourite gaṇa, whom Pārvatī adopted as a child before the appearance of Kumāra, as it is described in the *Matsya Purāṇa* account.[2]

The *Purāṇa* tells us that one day in their mountain abode in Kailāsa Pārvatī noticed the beautiful gaṇa Vīrabhadra and became desirous of adopting him. When the indulgent Śiva gave him to his wife, she took him in her arms and hugged and fondled him. Then she "decorated him with nice ornaments, such as a girdle of bells, armlets of gems and garlands. Then she put on him peculiar kinds of leaves, flowers, herbs, white mustard, etc. as prescribed to ward off evil sight". Later, we are told how Vīrabhadra loved playing in lotus ponds and, splashed with mud, would return to his parents. Indeed, both the attire and the reed-like garlands of the boy in the relief as well as the lotuses in his hands may confirm his identification with Vīrabhadra. It may be of interest to point out that in a somewhat later Umā-Maheśvara relief, Vīrabhadra is shown leading the gaṇas (Fig. 133), for he was inordinately fond

[1] Kramrisch, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
[2] *The Matsya Purāṇam*, II, p. 105.

of singing and dancing; and there he wears the same sort of locket that the boy in the Kathesimbhu panel sports (Fig. 259).

The third enigmatic relief is that at Kankesvari ghat (Fig. 261), where we see a female in an agitated condition with her torso bare and a seated male, whose right hand makes the gesture of assurance. This has been identified by Banerjee as the scene in the nuptial chamber after the wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī. The semi-nudity of Pārvatī is interpreted, by him, as the act of "undressing"; and the lurking snake as that which usually adorns Śiva's ear, but anticipating the love-making, has bashfully hidden behind the rocks, from where it peeps unable to contain its curiousity. Needless to say, this is all far-fetched, and indeed, Kālidāsa would have been a very poor poet had he visualized the scene as such. As a matter of fact, in his description it is Śiva rather than Pārvatī who makes all the overtures, as indeed is usual on such occasions. It appears to me that two interpretations of the scene are possible. If the violent motion of the woman's figure reflects her anger, then the gesture of reassurance made by the male may indicate that he is attempting to assuage her. The scene may then be identified as the incident when the two quarrelled as described in the *Kumārasambhava* section of the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[1]

In a *tête-à-tête* with Pārvatī, Śiva begins the conversation by saying: "My body is resplendent with lustre and your embracing me looks like a serpent coiling round a sandal tree. With apparel white and with the moonbeams falling on you, you look like the newmoon-lit night." Pārvatī sees in Śiva's remarks an aspersion to her dark complexion and becomes furious. With a sharp tongue, she retorts: "Thou callest me black; but thou art well-known as very black (Maha-kala), what shall I do? . . . What is the use of my life under the subjugation of a cunning husband?" Śiva, however, tries to reassure her by saying that he was merely joking, but her wrath remains unabated. She snatches herself away from Śiva's embrace and prepares to leave him. The angered Śiva responds: "It is true you are in every way like your father. The several limbs of your body appear like unreachable tall peaks of the Himâlayas with clouds embracing in the middle and trying to reach the Heavens. Your heart is hard to attain, as it is hard to traverse the dense forests of the Himâlayas. Your body is very hard, owing, no doubt, to the hardness of the rocks in the Himâlayas . . ."

Indeed, this may well be the scene that the Nepali artist has attempted to depict in the Kankesvari relief; perhaps, the snake is one of Śiva's protégés who takes a peek, not with erotic intent as suggested by Banerjee, but curious about the couple's argument. Or, it may well be present by virtue of the analogy Śiva uses in his opening

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

conversation, or again later, when he alludes to her crookedness as he compares Pārvatī to the Himalayas. One thing seems certain: Pārvatī is not undressing (which is not described by Kālidasa and would probably have shocked the artist's sense of decorum as well), and Śiva is hardly trying to undo his girdle as has been suggested. At any rate, even if this were the prelude to their love-making and Pārvatī was undressing, the gesture of Śiva's right hand would have no meaning in such a context. The gesture can have two implications only: either reassurance (*abhaya*) or it may mean "restrain yourself" (*tiṣṭha*).

With much greater plausibility, however, the scene may be identified with another incident described in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[1] Before the irate Pārvatī left for her father's home in order to obtain a fair complexion by rigorous penance, she asked Vīrabhadra to constantly guard Śiva's door so that no other female could enter. This offered an opportunity for Ādi, the son of Andhaka—who had been previously destroyed by Śiva—to avenge his father's death. Assuming the form of a snake, Ādi eluded Vīrabhadra and entered the house. Once inside, he disguised himself as Pārvatī, and by dancing voluptuously, tried to seduce Śiva. Śiva, however, saw through the deception and destroyed the demon. Following the method of continuous narration, the serpent in the relief, therefore, shows the entrance of Ādi, and then we see him again disguised as Pārvatī, dancing before Śiva.

Another frieze, evidently forming part of the same group, was recently discovered near the Hanuman Dhoka palace at Kathmandu (Fig. 262). Once again, against a rich background of delightful rockery with plants and animals, four figures are represented with consummate artistry. The larger size of two of the figures clearly suggests their greater importance. This is a typical device, employed both by Indian and by Nepali artists, to draw the attention of the beholder immediately upon the main figures in a given representation. It is almost manifestly clear that these fragments formed parts of much larger friezes, and isolated as they are, we are witnessing only bits and pieces of an elaborate story. This makes the identification of such odd pieces particularly difficult.

The large female in the relief seems about to strike a dwarf with her scarf. It is tempting to identify the female as Pārvatī, and the dwarf as Śiva disguised as the brahmin. Although the texts tell us that the brahmin's rude remarks about Śiva had angered Pārvatī, nowhere are we told that she actually attempted to strike him. Furthermore, at the time, Pārvatī was emaciated due to her austerities and was wearing a dress of leaves. Here, however, she is fully robed and ornamented and her hair is

[1] *Ibid.*, p.p 111-12.

elegantly coifed. Perhaps, a more acceptable suggestion is that the scene simply represents Pārvatī playing with a gaṇa of Śiva, although the dwarf does appear as a stereotyped caricature of a brahmin, similarly portrayed elsewhere in Nepali art. The male, in that case, is obviously Śiva being fanned by a maid-servant.

Several other such reliefs, executed in a similar style, are haphazardly stuck on later monuments within the temple of Paśupatinātha. In one of these, the entire court of Śiva at Kailāsa is shown very elaborately with a small boy being weighed against gold. Very likely the boy is the newly born Kumāra. In a second frieze the young Kumāra is being ceremoniously crowned, as it is described in some of the Purāṇas.

It thus, seems, abundantly clear that the sculptors could not have used Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* as their textual source for these reliefs. A far more likely source is the *Kumārasambhava* section of the *Matsya Purāṇa*, or perhaps the lost fourth *pāda* of the *Devī Purāṇa*, which treated the same theme and probably formed the basis for both Kālidāsa's and the *Matsya Purāṇa* versions. From the Gupta period, at least in the Gangetic plains, the Buddhists seem to have made little use of narrative reliefs in embellishing their shrines. On the other hand, both the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivas show a new zeal for propagating and popularizing their myths by visual means, probably as a direct result of the redaction of the Purāṇas. In Nepal the kings of the seventh and the eighth centuries, with the exception of Bhīmārjunadeva, reveal a distinct preferance for Śivaism, which must have been further strengthened by the Licchavi marriage ties with the royal house of Kanauj and Magadha. It is thus quite possible that these reliefs once did grace a Śaiva temple erected by Aṁśuvarman or one of the later Licchavis. If a Licchavi, the monarch most likely to have consecrated such a temple would be the avowed Śaiva poet-king, Jayadeva II.

III

Whether Śaiva or not, the friezes are refreshingly charming in their visual appeal. Although the rocks are rendered conceptually and deomonstrate a flair for stylization that goes as far back as Sanchi, they are endowed with greater abundance and exuberance, revealing the Nepali sculptors' delight in their mountainous environment. While their shapes are almost expressionistic abstractions, reminiscent of Ajanta murals, they are delineated with such an abandon, that they fill every available inch of the ground save that of the figures. Yet, far from engulfing the figures, these rocks bring them into sharper relief, if only by contrasting their geometric and jagged shapes with the mellifluent contours of the figurative forms. In the reliefs of

the Gupta period from Nachnakuthara or Chandimau (Figs. 263-266) or at Ellora, the rocks are rendered with a similar penchant for abstraction but the shapes are less assertive in their decorative flair. In the Nepali reliefs not only are they treated with a greater sense of design, but also with a feeling for depth so that often the figures appear to emerge out of the rocks, as for example the boy Vīrabhadra, or, more perceptively, the boar below the tree. Thus, these fragmentary reliefs not only reveal the inventiveness of the sculptors, but also manifest their imaginative boldness in juxtaposing interesting, and apparently conflicting, shapes and forms with such visual panache.

It is remarkable how, within the confines of so small a valley, the Nepali artists created such diverse styles. Although the figures, in general, conform to conventional types, there are perceptible differences in their expression as well as in their execution. The male figures display the same basic concept of form and proportion as the Dhvaka baha Bodhisattvas (Figs. 13, 14). The torso is modelled as a powerful mass that carries broad and heavy shoulders; the legs are as sturdy as columns; and yet, the form is imbued with a sense of natural grace and animation. Despite the somewhat abstract quality of the modelling, details such as the joints and muscular areas, particularly of the kneeling figures, have received greater attention. Especially lively is the delineation of the dancing female in the Kankesvari fragment (Fig. 261). The modelling of her torso seems quite unlike that of other female sculptures of the period. Usually the breasts are rendered as prominent globes pressing against one another (Figs. 216, 218), but here they are well separated and delineated with unusual naturalism. With consummate artistry, the sculptor has expressed a body caught up in sudden and violent motion, and hence, the tautly elongated torso, which heightens the sense of physical energy.

The faces of the figures, whether of Śiva or of the female attendants, with their round, moon-like shapes revealing a definite Mongoloid strain, are in many ways distinctive. The almond-shaped eyes have a strikingly vacuous stare, and it is blatantly apparent that the norms followed here were quite different from those applied to the Cha bahil devotees (Fig. 161). While the Cha bahil devotees seem to be more "Aryan", the figures in the Śaiva reliefs may perpetuate native types. Almost every figure is given a distinctive hair-style, that of Śiva in one instance (Fig. 261) closely imitating the beautifully cascading locks so favoured by Gupta artists (Fig. 267).

Although certain artistic conventions or clichés of style remained unchanged, the sculptors obviously enjoyed greater freedom in representing such subjects than

cult icons. The forms of the rocks, the gestures of the hands and even the postures are no doubt drawn from the traditional repertoire, but in their expression as well as in the clarity of the composition, the sculptors' virtuosity and sense of visual design are evident. Not only do they show a complete mastery in the use of the subtle language of gestures, but the richness of their imagination is also apparent in their graphic delineation of mountainous wilderness. Somewhere a snake lurks through the rocks; elsewhere a deer arches its back as it looks up at the approaching boy; or a boar is seen emerging from a crevice with its charcteristically inquisitive snorkel. Even more striking is the dancing peacock rendered with strict economy but with a delightful sense of animated design. Not again until the late Malla period, when the well-known peacock windows were carved in wood, do we find such a beautiful portrayals of the bird.

Stella Kramrisch has suggested a seventh century date for one of the panels, while Banerjee considers them as works of the fourth-fifth century. On comparison with the Chandimau or Nachnakuthara reliefs (Figs. 263-266), probably of the fifth century, the Nepali friezes certainly seem later. Kramrisch's date is much more realistic, although, as I have said earlier, they may have belonged to a temple built by Jayadeva II in the early eighth. Their dependence on Gupta relief sculpture is incontestable, but both in the treatment of form as well as in their decorativeness, they appear considerably more stylized and mannered than the Chandimau or Nachna reliefs with their simple elegance and compositional clarity. Within Nepal they certainly seem later than the inscribed Buddhist relief of about the sixth century (Fig. 165).

IV

Apart from these fragmentary but charming friezes, there are no other significant narrative sculptures until the late Malla period. The Kṛṣṇa temple in the Patan Darbar square, built in the seventeenth century, is richly embellished with continuous friezes depicting the story of the Indian epic, *Rāmāyaṇa* (Figs. 268-269). Of these, the battle scenes are the most dynamic, although the stereotyped representations of the figures make them monotonous. The poses of the combatants are essentially theatrical, and no doubt the sculptors were imitating the performances of such didactic dramas that they actually witnessed. This is also evident from the curtain fringe design that runs along the upper part of these friezes as well as in that which adorns a tank built by king Siddhinarasiṁhamalla (Fig. 271) within the Patan palace.

The subject matter of these reliefs cannot definitely be identified. Judging par-

ticularly by the modes of dresses and the European hats worn by some of the figures, they appear to represent secular themes (Fig. 272). More charming than the panels with the human figures are those with animals and grotesques. The rocks are now almost surrealistic designs, while a touch of whimsy enlivens the two delightful dwarfs blowing upon their trumpets (Fig. 271).

Unquestionably both groups of friezes are essentially pictorial representations and are merely plastic versions of contemporary narrative scrolls, which were extremely popular among the Vaiṣṇavas at this time. A comparison with a section of such a scroll depicting Kṛṣṇa-līlā (Fig. 270) demonstrates this graphically. As a matter of fact, it may be pertinent to observe here that Indian relief sculpture representing didactic stories has always imitated the pictorial modes. Whether at Bharhut or Sanchi, the flat, two-dimensional treatment of the figures and the compositional mode are obviously derived from the long scrolls that itinerant bards carried with them while they travelled from village to village.

The Bharhut or Sanchi manner persists with astonishing tenacity in these seventeenth century reliefs. While in the *Rāmāyaṇa* panels (Figs. 268-269) one composition simply telescopes into another in an uninterrupted fashion, in the palace friezes (Figs. 271-272) there is a subtle attempt to separate each sequence with trees. At the same time the trees, treated as conceptual designs rather than realistically, are cleverly integrated into each composition to indicate the rustic locale where the incidents occur. In addition, meandering stalks of lotus or vegetable scrolls, containing studies of animals along the top and bottom of the frieze, continue further the Bharhut tradition, in which similar meandering creeper motives decorate the coping stones.

Unlike the earlier reliefs, which were more concerned with direct visual narration, these friezes of the later Malla period—and similar carvings depicting Kṛṣṇa-līlā are also seen on wooden buildings—display a much greater decorative intent. Even as Rāma and Rāvaṇa are engaged in mortal combat (Fig. 268), there is little dramatic tension and the figures seem to pose on a stage. In addition, the exuberance of the ornamental designs, the decorative plants and flowers, the curtain fringes, or the rich scrollwork of the cusped arches make the reliefs sumptuous embellishments. Even the apparently militant figures follow the rhythmic motion of the swaying and convoluting vines and creepers.

Both the pictorial character of the composition and the ornateness of the design finally reach a climactic crescendo in rich repoussé and inlay works (Figs. 273-274), for which the Newari craftsmen still enjoy a reputation. Everything in the Nativity

plaque swirls or swishes with great flourish, whereas in the other every detail of a religious painting seems merely to have been transferred to a metal surface. Like many of their counterparts in other traditional cultures, the Newari sculptors or craftsmen by now had obviously arrived at an artistic cul-de-sac.

B. Images of Energy

V

It must now be overwhelmingly apparent that the limitations imposed by religious needs generally restricted the artist's freedom to exploit the possibilities of form. The images that the sculptor was commissioned to carve in stone or mould in metal were primarily meant for worship; hence, their hieratic character. Almost all the sculptures we have seen so far from the beginning of art history in Nepal are cult images and are, therefore, rendered as statues to be viewed directly from the front. For centuries the sculptors realized forms that were established, codified and surrounded with an aura of immutability so that there was no necessity for them to experiment with new forms or ideas. Moreover, the variety that one finds in India, particularly in the sculptures embellishing medieval temple walls, is unknown in Nepal because of the limited nature of Nepali wooden architectural design. There were thus fewer opportunities in which the sculptors could explore the inherent possibilities and interrelationships between ideal form and movement, which is what sculpture is all about.

Among the early Nepali works the two sculptures of Varāha and the Kālīyadamana are the only examples in which we see attempts to express the idea of energetic movement (Figs. 92, 90). In the Varāha the sculptor has used the conventional posture known in Indian literature as *pratyālīḍha* to emphasize the active nature of the god. Essentially, the body appears to stride forward with one leg bent, while the other is stretched to form a continuous line with the back. The "heroic diagonal" remained a stock convention with sculptors in India and Nepal and may have entered the sculptor's repertoire through Greco-Roman works. In freestanding sculptures, however, its use was limited, for it could only be applied to militant deities. In the early period, the gods, both in India and in Nepal, appear less violent than in the later tāntric phase. And certainly in the early Buddhist pantheon the divinities were never portrayed in a militant guise.

Apart from Varāha, the heroic diagonal was the basis, with some variation, for portraying the goddess Durgā killing the buffalo demon. The earliest dated image

representing the goddess is that at Pharphing consecrated in A.D. 1401 (Fig. 36). Once again, because of the insistence on frontality, the conflict appears less real and the posture somewhat contrived. Here, indeed, we find a complete symbolic use of the convention with little change from its much earlier prototype at Bhumara (Fig. 275). In neither instance have the sculptors attempted to show the tension or the drama of the combat. There is no effort on the part of the goddess, as she thrusts the trident into the buffalo; and even as the demon emerges from the buffalo's shoulders in the Nepali version, he seems a caricature of physical strength as he strikes a theatrical pose.

In contrast to the Pharphing Durgā, her representation on the Cambridge manuscript cover and that in a fully modelled bronze in the Heeramaneck collection are much more spirited and lively (Figs. 41, 276-277). In the Cambridge cover, although the goddess remains calm and placid, the sense of movement is enhanced by various means. The basic composition, as well as the sweeping posture of the buffalo, no doubt is derived ultimately from such Gupta prototypes as that at Bhumara (Fig. 275). However, the sense of energy implicit in the powerful buffalo is far better expressed by the sixteenth century Nepali sculptors. The lion below the goddess' right leg is much more active than the Pharphing lion, while the two demons thrown helter-skelter on either side add a greater sense of movement to the composition. The helpless and humiliated posture of the two fallen demons and the fact that they have lost their weapons are subtle touches that considerably enhance the dramatic quality of the scene.

In the Heeramaneck bronze (Fig. 276) the goddess is not engaged in combat but the militant posture is still applied. Nor is she angry, for her face is calm and serene. And yet, this little bronze remains one of the most expressive examples of the perfect synthesis between form and movement, or, to put it in another way, between full and extravagant shapes and fluid linear rhythm. The simplicity of the outline enhances the compactness of the modelling, and the sparse ornaments accentuate her physicality, while adequately covering her modesty. There is nothing contrived about her posture, nor is there any concern with a search for anatomical perfection, and yet her form is credible and informed with a sense of organic vitality.

This emphasis upon quintessential simplicity remains the basis for all sculptures that attempt to portray heroic figures. It must be pointed out that the majority of such sculptures of the Malla period are executed in bronze. Very few figures, in fact, can be attributed to an earlier age with any certainty. Apart from her Mahiṣāsuramardinī aspect, Durgā is also portrayed with slight variation as the destroyer of

the demons, Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa. In a striking example that forms the principal icon in the Bhagavatī temple at Bhadgaon (Fig. 278) she triumphs over the demons as she lassos them with two serpents. Despite the iconographic variety, there is little deviation either in the formal language or the composition. The majority of the other images of energy portray wrathful manifestations of Buddhist divinities, such as Vajrapāṇi, Jambhala, or Samvara, the last being the most popular (Figs. 281-283). It must also be remembered that usually the bronzes are of a rather diminutive size, not exceeding ten or twelve inches, and yet, so imaginative is their composition, that they often appear to be of monumental proportions.

Among the earliest and most outstanding examples of such figures are a Vajrapāṇi in the Paul Walter collection (Fig. 279) and a Jambhala, now in the British Museum (Fig. 280). Of the two figures, Jambhala is almost completely nude except for the serpents that form his ornaments and sacred thread. The sculptor has defined the form with severe economy without sacrificing, however, the sense of abundant and extravagant shapes. The entire figure is conceived in terms of convex lobes that flow into one another in smooth comprehensible arcs. The most prominent area of the torso is the curve of the stomach, which in a sense affects the upward thrust of the body and helps to diffuse the latent energy onto a wider surface. As in the case of the serene Durgā (Fig. 276), therefore, even the angry Jambhala remains an image of relaxed grace and controlled energy.

In the Walter Vajrapāṇi (Fig. 279), although the same basic figural type and proportions are employed, the sculptor seems to have been concerned more with the expression of rhythmic movement. While the position of the left arm, as it manifests the gesture of admonition, artfully conceals the rotundity of the stomach, the raised right hand serves a double function. Besides expressing the wrath of the god, as if he is about to hurl his thunderbolt at the evil-doer, it also emphasizes the upward thrust of the diagonal stress that begins at the left foot. Moreover, the fluttering and swaying ends of the scarf impart an additional sense of movement as well as a greater degree of buoyancy. Thus, although the figure is of unathletic proportions and his posture formal and hieratic, yet it is a fine realization of controlled vigour and restrained rhythm.

The convention of the heroic diagonal remained the most basic device for representing images of energy. Apart from its use in depiction of the wrathful deities, it was employed repeatedly to portray divinities engaged in copulation (Figs. 281-283). Such bronzes are remarkable both for the great finesse with which the subject has been portrayed, and for their technical dexterity. More than any others, these bronzes

indubitably attest to the continued vitality of the Nepali tradition of bronze casting well into the seventeenth century.

Of the three examples illustrated here, that in the British Museum is the simplest (Fig. 281). Only with two arms the god embraces his female partner as he tramples upon two prostrate figures. In the Ford bronze (Fig. 282) the basic formula remains the same except for the additional arms. In the Freer Gallery example (Fig. 283) the number of arms has increased still further, but otherwise, the image is virtually the same as the British Museum bronze.

Conceptually, in such bronzes, in which a male god is seen copulating with his female consort, we are given a very graphic but symbolic representation of the more abstract concepts of Buddhism known as *upāya* and *prajñā*. The Vajrayānists believe that the ultimate reality is achieved by the removal of ignorance, and the method or *upāya* by which this is accomplished is that of wisdom or *prajñā*. In the concrete representations of such abstract concepts, the male symbolizes the method or *upāya* and the female gnosis or *prajñā*.

Sculpturally, we have here a combined image of both energy and ecstasy. Energy is embodied in the form of the male deities, while the females appear ecstatic as they wrap one of their legs around the thigh of the male and fling their arms around his neck. There is no suggestion of any vulgar eroticism, however, either overt or implied. Rather, as one looks at these figures, one is at once aware of the spontaneous grace as well as the equipoise and rhythmic balance of the entwined figures. No Dionysiac frenzy is involved in their embrace; but like two lovers, the couple is totally immersed in each other, thereby relating intimately to the human experience. Looking at such delightfully conceived forms, one can well appreciate why the ancient Indian seers deemed it appropriate to use a sexual metaphor to explain celestial bliss. The basic formula for such imagery of copulating deities, with its harmony of form and movement, remains one of the most successful inventions of the artistic mind.

VI

Apart from the heroic diagonal, the other expressive pattern for portraying the image of energy is derived from the repertoire of the dancer. The art of dance in India has always been closely associated with that of sculpture. In no other form of human activity but the dance is the body so completely involved with movement and so expressive of the rhythm of life. Like the ancient Greeks, the Indians also realized the infinite possibilities implicit in the movement of the dance, and some of the live-

liest sculptural interpretations of the dancing body may be seen on the temple walls. In the service of more conventional religious sculpture, however, we encounter only one or two stereotyped formulas that are employed ubiquitously throughout the centuries.

One of the earliest representations of a dancing goddess in Nepal may be seen in a low relief portraying Cāmuṇḍā, although locally she is known as Vanakālī (Fig. 284). Cāmuṇḍā is an emaciated and ferocious form of Durgā, a form she assumed to destroy the demons Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, and hence, the origin of her name, Cāmuṇḍā. Her dancing form, however, is rare in Nepal, which makes this example particularly interesting.

While the theologians have always alluded to Cāmuṇḍā as a form of Durgā, in Sanskrit poetry she appears as a companion of the emaciated Bhṛṅgī, the devout attendant of Śiva. The poet Yogeśvara's verse charmingly describes the joy in Śiva's house at the birth of Kumāra, which inspired Bhṛṅgī and Camuṇḍā to begin dancing; "the sound of their dancing skeletons rattling above the heavy roar of the beaten drums of the gods".[1] That the concept of a dancing Cāmuṇḍā was well-known to the Indian tradition is attested to in a beautiful verse of the poet Bhavabhūti. The verse captures both the macabre character of the emaciated goddess as well as the frenzy of the dance, just as the unknown Nepali sculptor has expressed the theme with remarkable finesse and almost as an abstract design.

> I praise your dance, Cāmuṇḍā
> so perfectly performed it wins applause in Śiva's court.
> The whirling of your bold *niśumbha*
> has pressed earth's ball upon the turtle's shell
> until he shakes the framework of the universe
> and all the seven seas well up to fill, instead of Hades,
> the yawning caverns of your cheeks.[2]

In most sculptures of dancing figures, the common convention that became stereotyped was to plant one of the legs, although bent, on the ground so that it carried the weight, while the other was raised in one or more ways to convey the rhythm of movement. In some instances, as in the case of the corpulent Gaṇeśa (Fig. 285), the right leg is only slightly raised so that the expression is more gentle, for his dance is more frolicsome than symbolic. It is Gaṇeśa's dance, according to the poet Rājaśekhara,[3] that is:

[1] Ingalls, *op. cit.*, p. 97.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

> copied by the guardian elephants of the horizon,
> who spring up lightly from the earth that trembles
> at the stamping of his feet . . . .

Indeed, compared to the more active dance of his father, Gaṇeśa's dance is one of simple joy, like that of the child Kṛṣṇa delighted with his sweets.

The most effective formula invented by the Nepali sculptors to express the rhythm of the dance may be seen in a figure of Kurukullā, the Buddhist goddess of love (Fig. 286). As she dances in ecstasy, with her two principal hands she engages in shooting an arrow. Although the left leg alone carries her entire weight, the body is in perfect equilibrium. The right leg, suspended skillfully along the horizontal plane, balances the emphatic vertical pull suggested by the rhythmic rise of the outline from the left foot all the way up to the head, like the swaying stalk of a plant. Indeed, the figure can well be reduced to the form of an organic plant, the body corresponding to the stem and the arms to the branches. And in this sense one may state that the sculptor has expressively transplanted the dynamic rhythm of nature into the human form. This same basic schema is also applied to many other similar dancing figures, as we see in a bronze Vajravārāhī and in a wooden sculpture of a dancer (Figs. 287-288). While they may differ in formal qualities, the same equilibrium between the horizontal and the vertical is achieved in an identical manner. It is remarkable how the mode of expression remains unaltered, and yet no two sculptures are identical.

Perhaps the most charming figure of a dancer occurs in a relief that is arbitrarily stuck on a brick wall in Kathmandu (Fig. 289). Although the figure is that of an apsaras, or a mythical nymph, the posture is remarkably human. The position of the arms and the feet are identical to a magnificent image of dancing Śiva at Aihole.[1] In the dancer's parlance, the position is that of the *pārśvajānu* variety, while the right hand is in *kaṭakāmukha*, and the left in *dola hasta*. In keeping with the rhythm of the dance the sculptor has treated the scrolls with equal exuberance. They appear like wings grafted to the shoulders and create a dreamlike design that adds to her elfish character.

Even more decorative, and revealing of this same sense of rhythmic movement, is a pair of *kinnara* adoring a conch (Fig. 290). Undoubtedly both reliefs once adorned the same temple, and particularly intriguing is the leafy "bib" that adorns the neck of both creatures. In the case of the dancing figure, this garment is elongated and lowered to cover her modesty. A glance at a similar figure from Bhumara leaves

[1] K. Vatsyayana, *Classical Indian Dance in Literature and the Arts*, New Delhi, 1968, Fig. 137 and p. 370.

us in no doubt as to its source (Fig. 291). Compared to the Gupta *kinnara* or apsaras, these Nepali versions are even more imaginative and flamboyant (Fig. 292). Once more, they reiterate my earlier suggestion that there must have existed in Licchavi Nepal one or more magnificent Śaiva temples modelled upon the Indian temples of the Gupta period.

In the ultimate analysis, whether the image of energy, as embodied mostly in tāntric representations of the Malla period, uses the heroic diagonal or the alternate convention drawn from the dancer's repertoire, the emphasis is always on the clarity and logic of the pure outline. Although at times the sculptor resorts to exaggerations to enhance the effect of movement, there is no attempt to express rippling muscles and sinews. The body is always smooth, relaxed and constrained to its bare essentials. After all, the image was a symbol of divine rather than of physical energy, and its symbolic character was never forgotten, either by the devotee or the artist.

CONCLUSION

I

Considering that the Bagmati valley is an area of only about two hundred square miles, the variety of sculpture created by the Nepali artists is astonishingly rich. Beginning around the third century A.D., they continuously nourished their sculptural tradition with remarkable vitality for almost fifteen hundred years. Undoubtedly, artistic ideas entered the country along with religious concepts and cultural traits from India; but once they reached the mountain-girt valley they were absorbed, assimilated, and reinterpreted by the local sculptors with great artistry and virtuosity.

Perhaps this is why no one Indian style is seen to predominate in Nepal. Already in the third century, although the artist was more than aware of the highly productive Mathura school of the Kuṣāṇa period, the sculptures created in the valley reflect a distinctive style. The treatment of the form in both Kuṣāṇa and early Licchavi sculpture is remarkably alike, with the same emphasis on heavy, ponderous proportions and volumetric modelling, but the expression is different. Rather than emphasizing the sculptural mass, the Newari sculptors reveal a strong penchant for a crisp and articulately defined outline. The modelling, thus compacted, often appears as perfunctory, as in the Hāritī or in the portrait sculpture (Figs. 59, 62). Equally distinctive is the physiognomy of the early sculptures (Figs. 64, 66, 72), and these faces may well preserve the likeness of Kirātas or such other tribes that inhabited the valley at the time. For the next thousand years such native physiognomical traits recur occasionally, despite the strong influences of the idealized norms imported from India. Ultimately, after the fourteenth century, the typically Newari face becomes readily discernible, just as the Chinese face is characteristic of Chinese sculpture. This Newari face (Figs. 36, 42) is not obviously Mongoloid, but neither does it show the sharply defined features of the earlier "Aryan" ideal. The shape of the face tends to be square; the features are less articulately delineated; the eyes often appear as slits; and the general expression is soft and serene.

By the middle of the fifth century, Indian art, particularly in the northern schools, had undergone a distinct transformation. The earthly ponderosity and vegetative abundance of the Kuṣāṇa style had given way to a more disciplined and taut modelling defined by a sinuous and rhythmic outline. Only the Sarnath and Mathura schools

of the Gupta period are well-known, but other centres—such as Bhumara, Aphsad and Muṇḍeśvarī in Bihar; Samlaji area in Rajasthan; Deogarh and the Gwalior-Jhansi region in Madhyapradesh—must have been equally important. But whatever the regional differences, sculptures from all these areas are characterized by certain basically similar aesthetic ideals and norms, whose quintessential expression remains the Buddhas of Sarnath (Fig. 19).

These ideals also reached Nepal, perhaps more strongly from Sarnath or Mathura, but equally palpably from some of the other centres and areas. But once again, because of the assimilative genius of the sculptors of the valley, it is difficult to define the extent of such influences with any precision. It also seems likely that some of the Deccani schools, such as Ajanta and Kanheri, which may have been visited by Nepali monks, were familiar to the sculptors, as is evidenced by motifs and iconographic clichés present particularly in Buddhist sculptures. Generally, the Gupta norms and stylistic elements were better assimilated by the Nepali sculptors in the sixth rather than the fifth century.

Each nation or culture appears to have been artistically more creative during certain historical epochs than in others. Perhaps, the most distinguished period of Nepali sculpture stretches over the seventh and the eighth centuries. Never before, or since, had Nepal enjoyed such political power and prestige as she did under Aṁśuvarman, his Gupta successors and the restored Licchavis: Narendradeva, Śivadeva II, and his son Jayadeva II. The visits of Chinese ambassadors or the matrimonial alliances of the Licchavis with such illustrious Indian dynasties as the Maukharis of Kanauj and the Later Guptas of Magadha indicate a new sense of glory that the country had not experienced even under the great Mānadeva I. Judging by the rich use of Sanskrit and whatever poetry one can glean from the Licchavi epigraphs, the courts of these Nepali monarchs must have glittered with poets and pundits from the Indian plains. It is not unlikely that sculptors, too, found enlightened patronage at the courts; but if they did, they must have been absorbed quickly into the fabric of Nepali culture, for the sculptures of the period remain distinctly "Nepali".

There is something heroic and monumental about the Vaiṣṇava sculptures of the seventh century (Figs. 89, 90, 92), just as there is a rhythmic vitality about the Śaiva friezes or the carvings on the Licchavi caityas (Figs. 258-62, 158-161). No doubt all these works reflect ideas and conventions borrowed from India, but they are all reinterpreted with a different expressiveness and flavour, just as the Javanese sculptors or the T'ang masters created new forms, although the content was often derived from Indian Buddhist literary materials. Indeed, Nepal seems to stand in the same relation

to India as does eighth or ninth century Java, and only because of Nepal's closer proximity to the source can one perceive a stronger Indian influence on her sculpture.

If the sculpture of the Licchavi period is characterized by a greater narrative intent and heroic grandeur, by the tenth century a stronger hieratic impulse becomes manifest. This was inevitable since the primary function of the sculptor was to create icons according to strict theological formulae. These images, except for liṅgas or votive stūpas, were invariably viewed frontally by the devotee, and hence, the *en face* representation was a desideratum. It is evident that by this time the iconographic texts had been codified, and although the sculptors remained inventive, they had little freedom to deviate from the prescribed formula. And yet, a comparison of the two eleventh century icons of the sun god from Patan (Figs. 28-29) with that consecrated in 1159 at Naksal (Fig. 34) clearly establishes the sculptors' flair for originality.

This was also the period when a distinct regional style had developed in Bihar and Bengal, during the rule of the Pālas, and most scholars have assumed that the Pāla style exerted a strong influence on that of Nepal. It has been clearly demonstrated throughout the present study that this is simply an arbitrary observation that cannot be substantiated at all. Undoubtedly, Nepali sculptors were familiar with Pāla bronzes—interestingly enough not a single stone sculpture of Bihar or Bengal has so far been discovered in the valley—and may even have borrowed ornamental or decorative motives, but for the most part the treatment of the sculptural mass remains distinctive in the two areas. Whereas the Nepali sculptors reveal a definite predilection for linear, compacted modelling imbued with almost athletic grace, Pāla sculptures are characterized by a more naturalistic modelling, exuding a sense of languid sensuousness.

The repertoire of the sculptor was considerably enriched during the Malla period by tāntric imagery. These new concepts provided him with new challenges, both in terms of form and technical dexterity. Diverse images with multifarious arms and legs were not simply expressions of aesthetically satisfying forms, but they obviously afforded the sculptors with marvellous opportunities to exploit their fantasies. In many instances, the content itself was macabre, others involved portrayal of intricate forms in motion; and often the result was the creation of dynamic sculptures, expressing a perfect equilibrium between form and fantasy (Figs. 279-283). Apart from such fanciful imagery, however, in the more conventional sculptures, the artists were severely limited because of the immutability of an iconic form once it was conceived. The sculptors of the Malla period, therefore, reveal a greater interest in exuberant ornamentation. This penchant for decoration is expressed not simply in

terms of ornate aureoles, but often in the increasing ornamentations of the body itself. The intricately adorned surfaces now frequently overwhelm the sculptural mass, and delicate design rather than formal grandeur becomes the sculptor's primary concern.

II

Apart from the portraits of the Kuṣāṇa emperors, those of the Gupta monarchs on their coins and those of the Pallavas in stone, it is not until the Mughal period in India that we again encounter a strong tradition of portraiture. In Nepal, however, the tradition may have been more continuous. Certainly, during the later Malla period there was a profusion of portrait sculptures, as one king after another had his likeness preserved for posterity. Generally, such sculptures were placed in front of temples or other buildings for which the monarchs were responsible. Usually these portraits, mostly in gilt bronze, also followed a stereotyped pattern (Figs. 47, 49). While the faces can, with some effort, be recognized, the portraits are strongly idealized, and the figures are all shown either seated or in semi-kneeling postures. The practice was not limited only to princes, but the likenesses of other benefactors or saintly monks were similarly perpetuated (Fig. 105). Even in such instances, the tendency was to crate an idealized representation rather than capture an exact physical semblance. And just as in the *Pratimānāṭaka*, when Bharata failed to recognize his father's portrait but appreciated it all the same, so also some of these Nepali portraits must have appeared quite adequate even to close relatives. The function of such portraits was to represent the monarch as a "kingly" person, and hence, a conceptual stereotype was used repeatedly, irrespective of the individual features of the person portrayed.

This tradition of idealized portraiture may, in fact, be as old as the early Licchavi period. At least two sculptures of the fourth or the fifth century may well be portraits of royal personages (Figs. 62, 64). I have also discussed at length the possibility that three of the early Garuḍas (Figs. 98-101), with their distinctive physiognomies, may preserve likenesses of the donors. Except for their cape-like wings, they are hardly recognizable as Garuḍa. There is nothing surprising in the fact that a devout Vaiṣṇava monarch should identify himself with the god's faithful mount. But what is even more significant is the attempt by some princes to claim almost divine status by likening themselves unto Viṣṇu himself. We know of at least two such instances: once when Viṣṇugupta installed a giant image of Viṣṇu with two attendants, who

are said to represent the donor and his two sons; and again, when Sthitimalla commissioned an icon of Viṣṇu to be made following the proportions of his deceased son. Possibly there are other such sculptures in the country that portray a king or a prince in the guise of a god. This seems to have been a tradition that was also followed both in Cambodia and Java, where, similarly, kings were represented as Śiva, Lokeśvara, or Viṣṇu. And there also such portraits, with few exceptions, are idealized rather than being true to life.

Finally, this study of Nepali sculpture may be brought to a conclusion with a few words about the influence exerted by the tradition outside the geographic frontiers of the country. There is no evidence to believe that any influences from Nepal flowed back into India. While the impact of Nepali art on that of Tibet was profound, its influence on the Buddhist art of China is perceptible, perhaps less pervasively than on Tibetan art, only after the thirteenth century.

Nepal's relations with Tibet probably began in the seventh century, when king Songtsen-gampo took a Nepali princess as his wife. Very likely, artists and monks accompanied their princess as did Buddhist texts and images. Although it is difficult to attribute any Tibetan sculpture with certainty to the seventh century, some of the clay images that supposedly belong to the eighth century (Fig. 293) definitely show a stronger Nepali influence than they do Indian. Rather than the more sensitive and sensuous modelling of Pāla sculpture, such Tibetan figures reveal the same penchant for simple surfaces circumscribed by clear outlines, as is apparent in the Dhvaka baha figures or the Cha bahil Bodhisattva (Figs. 13-14, 187). And bronzes such as those of the Buddha and Avalokiteśvara, even if cast in Tibet, must certainly be the works of Nepali sculptors (Figs. 294-295).

Tibetan texts, both of the western kingdom of Guge and of central Tibet, repeatedly attest to the continuous presence of Nepali artists in the country, working particularly for the monasteries. During the Malla period, as it has been pointed out in the Introduction, the "urha" formed the principal community of metal-casters in Tibet. And indeed, after the fifteenth century, it often becomes impossible to distinguish whether a sculpture was produced in Nepal or in Tibet by urha craftsmen (Fig. 296). Only because of the physiognomical features, which are more Mongoloid than those seen in the Nepali models, can one recognize some works (Figs. 297-298) as Tibetan rather than as Nepali.

With regard to China, this influence is more indirect and is evident in Buddhist sculptures only from the time of the Mongol emperor Kubilai Khan. After the emperor was converted to Buddhism by Phakpa, the abbot of the Sakya monastery, Kubilai

requested his preceptor to send him an eminent artist. It is a tribute to the artistic excellence of the Newaris that Phakpa passed on the request to the king of Nepal, who dispatched a group of sculptors and painters, led by the young A-ni-ko. Subsequently, A-ni-ko achieved great fame at the imperial court, and his instructions, codified by a disciple, remained a standard manual for Lamaist art in China for centuries after his death. Although after the fifteenth century Lamaist art developed more or less a unified style that was employed in Tibet, China, Mongolia and even Nepal, the basic elements of that style, apparent in the Chinese sculptures illustrated here (Figs. 299-300), derive unquestionably from Nepal. If these images were not actually cast after visual models, they very likely were based upon A-ni-ko's manual.

Thus, while Indian aesthetic ideas played a formative role in developing Nepal's sculptural tradition, in her turn, the small Himalayan kingdom contributed, in no small measure, towards the enrichment of the artistic expressions of the Lamaist world.

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178. Buddha with Bodhisattvas, Siddhapokhri (Bhadgaon), 6th century.
179. Fragment showing Māra's horde, National Museum (Kathmandu), 8th century
180. Buddha's descent from the Tuṣita heaven, Patan, 10th century.
181. Buddha, Patan, 6th century.
182. Buddha with Bodhisattvas, Patan, 8th-9th century.
183. Buddha, Cha bahil, 10th century.
184. Buddha, Coll. F. Neustatter (Los Angeles), 11th century.
185. Buddha or Maitreya, British Museum, 11th century.
186. Buddha or Maitreya, Nalanda, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 9th century.
187. Avalokiteśvara, Cha bahil, ca. A.D. 800.
188. Avalokiteśvara, Kathesimbhu, Early 9th century.
189. Avalokiteśvara, Kwa bahal, 9th-10th century.
190. Avalokiteśvara, Private Collection (U.S.A.), 9th-10th century.
191. Avalokiteśvara, Yampi baha (Patan), 10th century.
192. Avalokiteśvara, Private Collection (U.S.A.), 10th century.
193. Avalokiteśvara, Doris Wiener Gallery, 11th century.
194. Avalokiteśvara, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 13th century.
195. Avalokiteśvara, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Ross-Coornaraswamy Collection, 14th century.
196. Avalokiteśvara, Kwa bahal, 14th century.
197. Avalokiteśvara, Deo Patan, 17th century.
198. Sugatisandarśana Lokeśvara, Cleveland Museum of Art, Edward L. Whittemore Fund, 15th century.

199. Siṁhanāda Avalokiteśvara, Cha bahil, 9th-10th century.
200. Avalokiteśvara, Kwa bahal, 12th century.
201. Vajrapāṇi, Private Collection (U.K.), 11th century.
202. Vajrapāṇi, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 8th century.
203. Vajrapāṇi, Coll. Christian Humann (New York), 8th century.
204. Vajrapāṇi, Naga baha (Patan), 8th century.
205. Vajrapāṇi, National Museum (New Delhi), 11th century.
206. Mañjuśrī, Nalanda, National Museum (New Delhi), 10th century.
207. Mañjuśrī, Coll. Doris Wiener, 11th century.
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209. Dharmaśaṅkhasamādhi Mañjuśrī, Coll. Alice Heeramaneck (New York), 11th century.
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211. Avalokiteśvara, Kashmir (India), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 10th century.
212. Maitreya, Coll. John Ford (Baltimore), ca. A.D. 1200.
213. Vajrasattva, British Museum. ca. A.D. 1400.
214. Mañjuśrī, Cleveland Museum of Art, The Norweb Collection, ca. A.D. 1400.
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219. Tārā, Sarnath, National Museum (New Delhi), 8th century.
220. Tārā, Bihar, Indian Museum, 8th-9th century.
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228. Devī, Pashupatinath, 15th century.
229. Devī, British Museum, 11th-12th century.
230. Devī, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Louis V. Bell Fund 1966, 14th century.
231. Devī, Nala, 13th century.

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234. Vatsaleśvarī, Pashupatinath, 12th century.
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236. Bracket Figure, Uku bahal, 13th century.
237 Vasudhārā, National Museum (Rome), 15th century.
238. Vajratārā, Indian Museum, 15th century.
239. Prajñāpāramitā, Private Collection (Cleveland), 15th century.
240. Sarasvatī, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Marshall H. Gould Fund, ca. A.D. 1500.
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244. Brahmā, Deo Patan, 8th century.
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248. Kārttikeya, Gairidhara, 12th-13th century.
249. Kārttikeya, Harigaon, 9th century.
250. Vāsuki, Tukan bahal, 11th century.
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252. Nāgarāja, Cha bahil, 8th century.
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260. Śaiva Frieze, Nagal tole, 7th-8th century.
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263. Śaiva Relief, Chandimau (Bihar), Indian Museum, 5th century.

264. Śaiva Relief, Chandimau, Indian Museum, 5th century.
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266. *Rāmāyaṇa* Frieze, Nachnakuthara, 5th century.
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284. Vanakālī, Mrigasthali, 10th century (?).
285. Dancing Gaṇeśa, Bhagavatī Temple, ca. A.D. 1400.
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287. Vajravārāhī, Coll. H. K. Swali, ca. A.D. 1400.
288. Dancing Figure, Denver Art Museum, 17th century.
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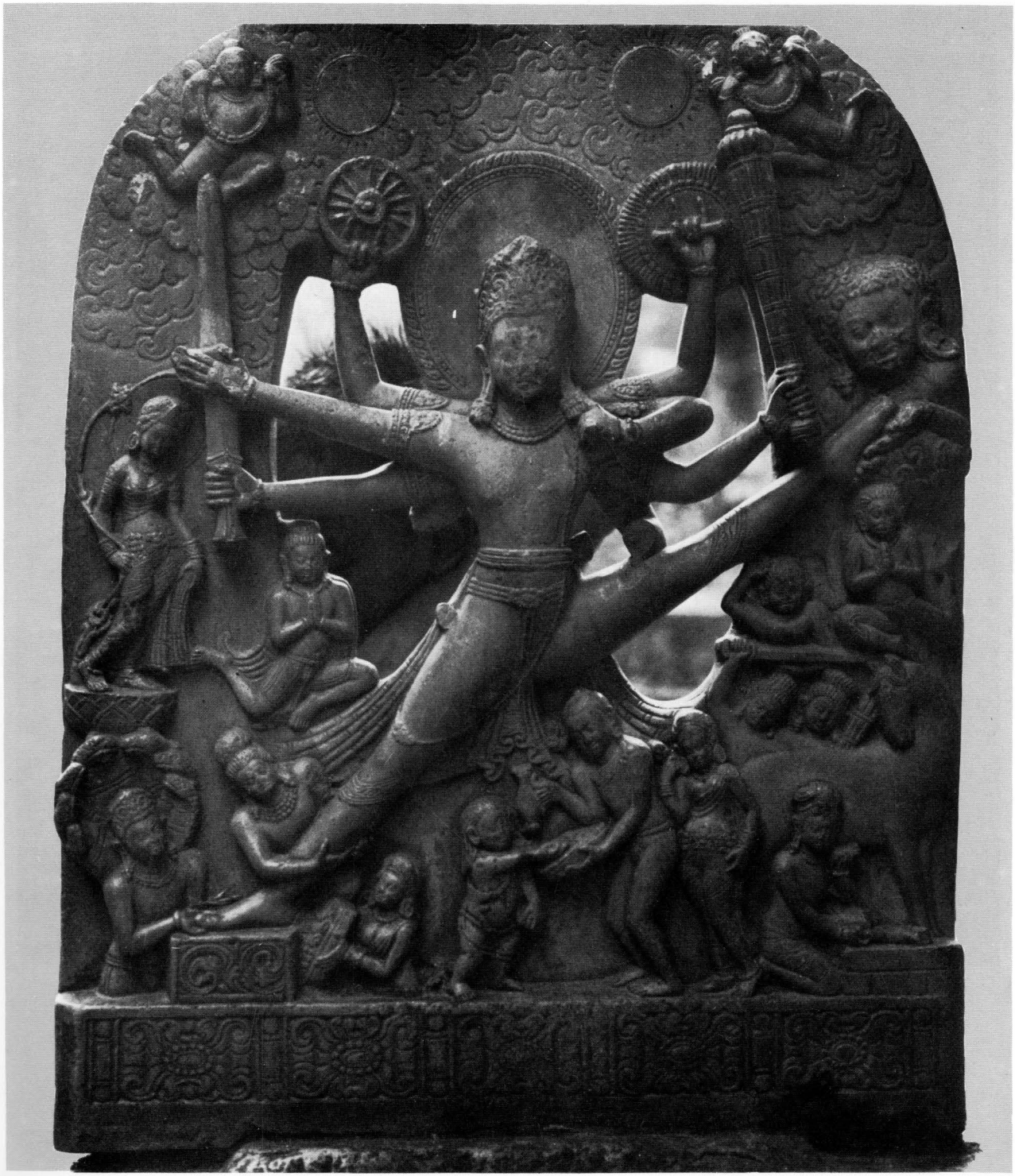
293. Avalokiteśvara, Lhasa (Tibet), 10th century (?).
294. Buddha, Tibet House (New Delhi), 10th century.
295. Avalokiteśvara, Tibet House, 12th century.
296. Maitreya, Tibet, Fogg Art Museum (Cambridge, Mass.), Gift—Mrs. Davenport West, ca. A.D. 1600.

297. Vajrasattva, Tibet, Center of Asian Art and Culture, M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, 16th century.
298. Shrine Doors with Bodhisattvas, Tibet, British Museum, 16th century.
299. Bodhisattva, China, Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago), 14th century.
300. Buddha, China, British Museum, A.D. 1403-24.

PLATES

1. Viṣṇu vikrānta, Tilganga, A.D. 467.

2. Viṣṇu vikrānta, Lajimpat, A.D. 467 (?).



3. Viṣṇu vikrānta, Changu Narayan, 9th century.

4. Viṣṇu vikrānta, Pharphing, 13th century.

5. Trivikrama, Badami (India), Cave 3, A.D. 578.

6. Trivikrama, Badami, Cave 2, ca. A.D. 550.

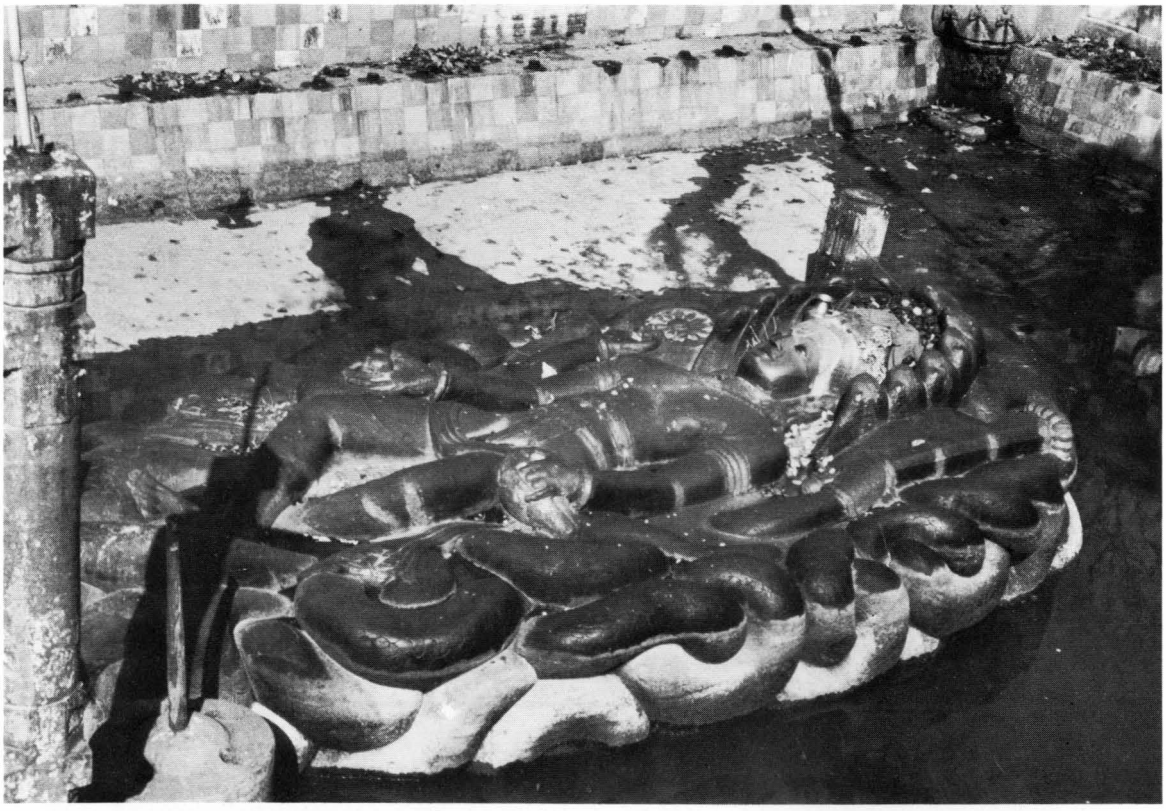
7. Śiva-Pārvatī, Kosam (India), A.D. 459.

8. Avalokiteśvara, Gana bahal (Kathmandu), ca. A.D. 550.

9. Umā-Maheśvara, Sikubahi (Patan), A.D. 573.

10. Mithuna couple, Badami, Cave 3, A.D. 578.

11. Brahmā, Chapagaon, A.D. 500-550.



12. Jalaśayana Viṣṇu, Budhanilkanth, A.D. 642.

13. Licchavi caitya (showing Padmapāṇi),
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14. Detail of Fig. 13 showing Vajrapāṇi.

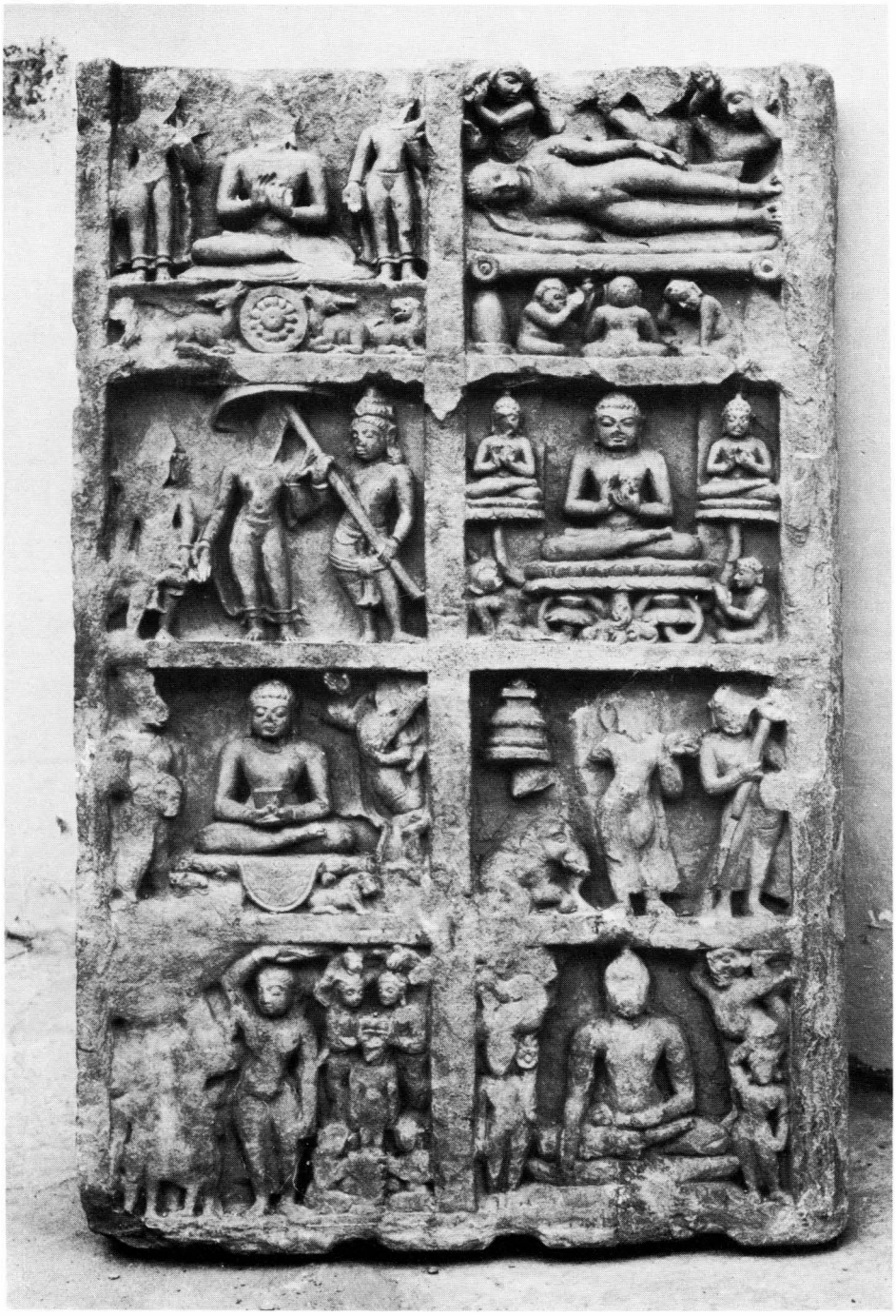
15. Detail of Fig. 13 showing Buddha.

16. Detail of Fig. 13 showing Buddha or Maitreya.

17. Buddha, Mathura (India), 6th century.

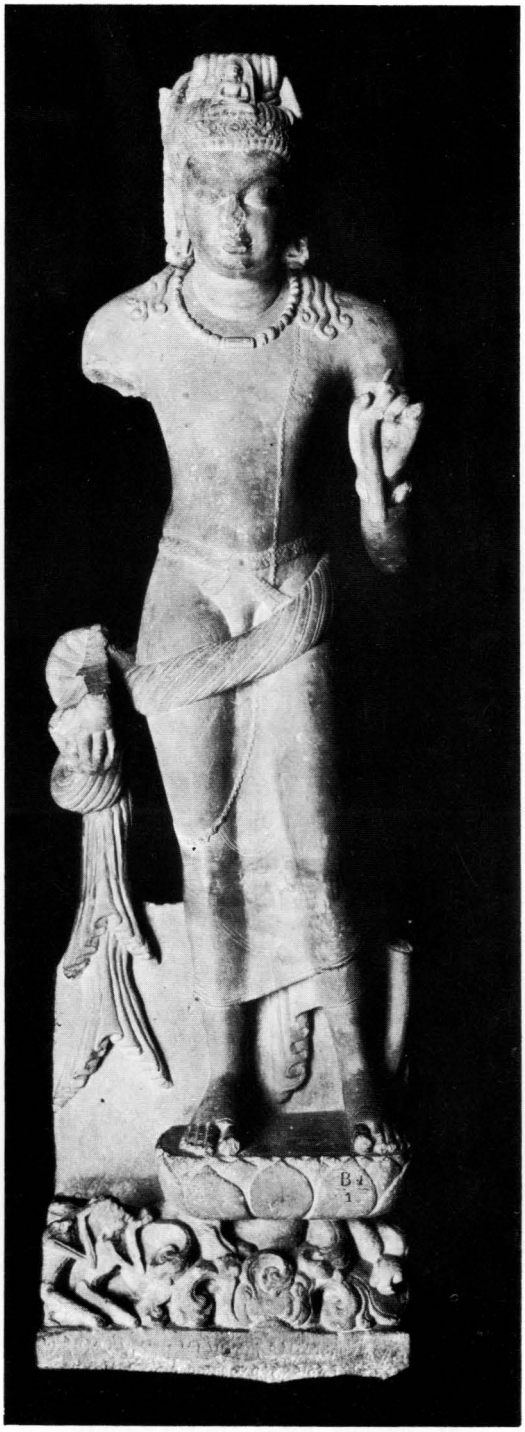
18. Buddha taming Nalagiri, Bihar (India), ca. A.D. 890.

19. Three Buddhas, Sarnath (India), 5th century.



20. Eight Great Miracles from the Buddha's life, Sarnath, 6th century.

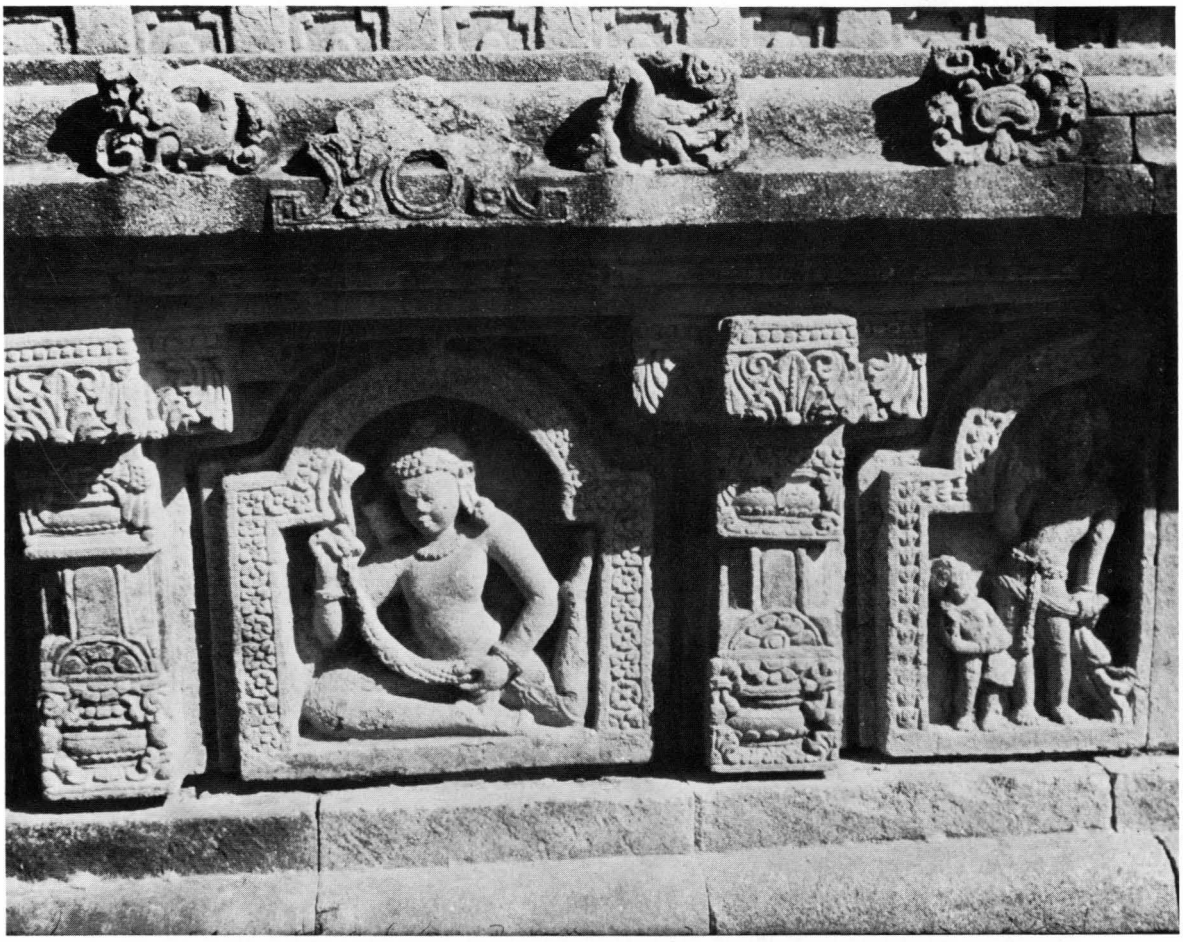
21. Buddha, Bihar, 7th-8th century.



22. Avalokiteśvara, Sarnath, 5th century.

23. Bodhisattva, Aurangabad (India), 6th century.

24. Avalokiteśvara, Nalanda (India), 7th century.



25. Gandharva, Nalanda, 7th century.

26. Buddha, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection. 9th century.

27 Umā-Maheśvara, Kwa bahal tole (Pàtan), A.D. 987.

28. Sūrya, Thapahiti (Patan), A.D. 1065.

29. Sūrya, Saugal (Patan), A.D. 1083.

30. Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu, Coll. Jack Zimmerman (New York), A.D. 1004.

31. Viṣṇu, Present location Unknown, A.D. 1052 (?)

32. Śiva liṅga, Coll. S. Eilenberg (New York), A.D. 1060.

33. Mañjunātha, Kathmandu, 11th century.

34. Sūrya, Naksal, A.D. 1159.

35. Sūrya, Banepa, A.D. 1349.

36. Jhaṅkeśvarī, Pharphing, A.D. 1407.

37. Tāntric Emblems, Pharphing, A.D. 1407.

38. Umā-Maheśvara, Harigaon, A.D. 1414.

39. Vasudhārā, Coll. B. S. Cron (England), A.D. 1467.

40. Mañjuśrī and Prajñā, Coll. Mrs. Edgar Britton, Littleton (USA), A.D. 1571.

41. Manuscript Covers, University Library, Cambridge, A.D. 1583.

42. Indra, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), A.D. 1589.

43. Akṣobhya, Svayambhunath, A.D. 1636.

44. Jambhala, British Museum, A.D. 1660.

45. Mahākāla, Svayambhunath, A.D. 1661.

46. Avalokiteśvara, Svayambhunath, A.D. 1677.

47. Portrait of a Donor, Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay, A.D. 1694.

48. Viṣṇu, Prince of Wales Museum, A.D. 1698.

49. Donors, Denver Art Museum, A.D. 1821.

50. Avalokiteśvara, Yengu bahal (Patan), 11th century (?).

51. Umā-Maheśvara, Ganchanani (Patan), A.D. 1032 (?).

52. Śaṅkara-Nārāyaṇa, Deo Patan, 17th century.

53. Epiphany of the Buddha, Kanheri (India), 6th century.

54. Bodhisattva, National Museum (Kathmandu), 2nd-3rd century A.D

55. Bodhisattva, Patna Museum (India), 2nd century A.D.

56. Viṣṇu (?), Kumbheśvara Temple (Patan), ca. A.D. 400.

57. Side view of Fig. 56.

58. Hāritī, Balaju, 3rd century A.D.

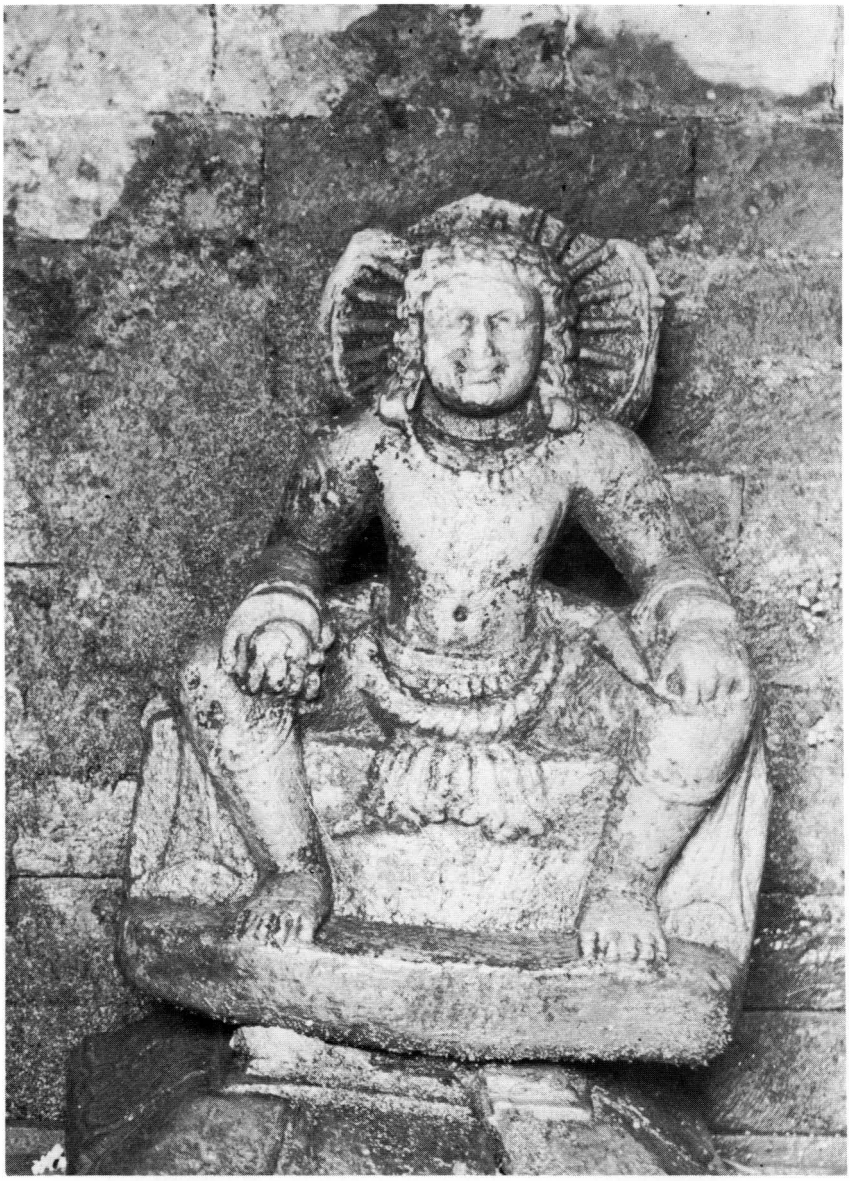
59. Hāritī, Kwa bahal (Patan), 3rd century A.D.

60. Hāritī, Patan, 7th-8th century A.D.

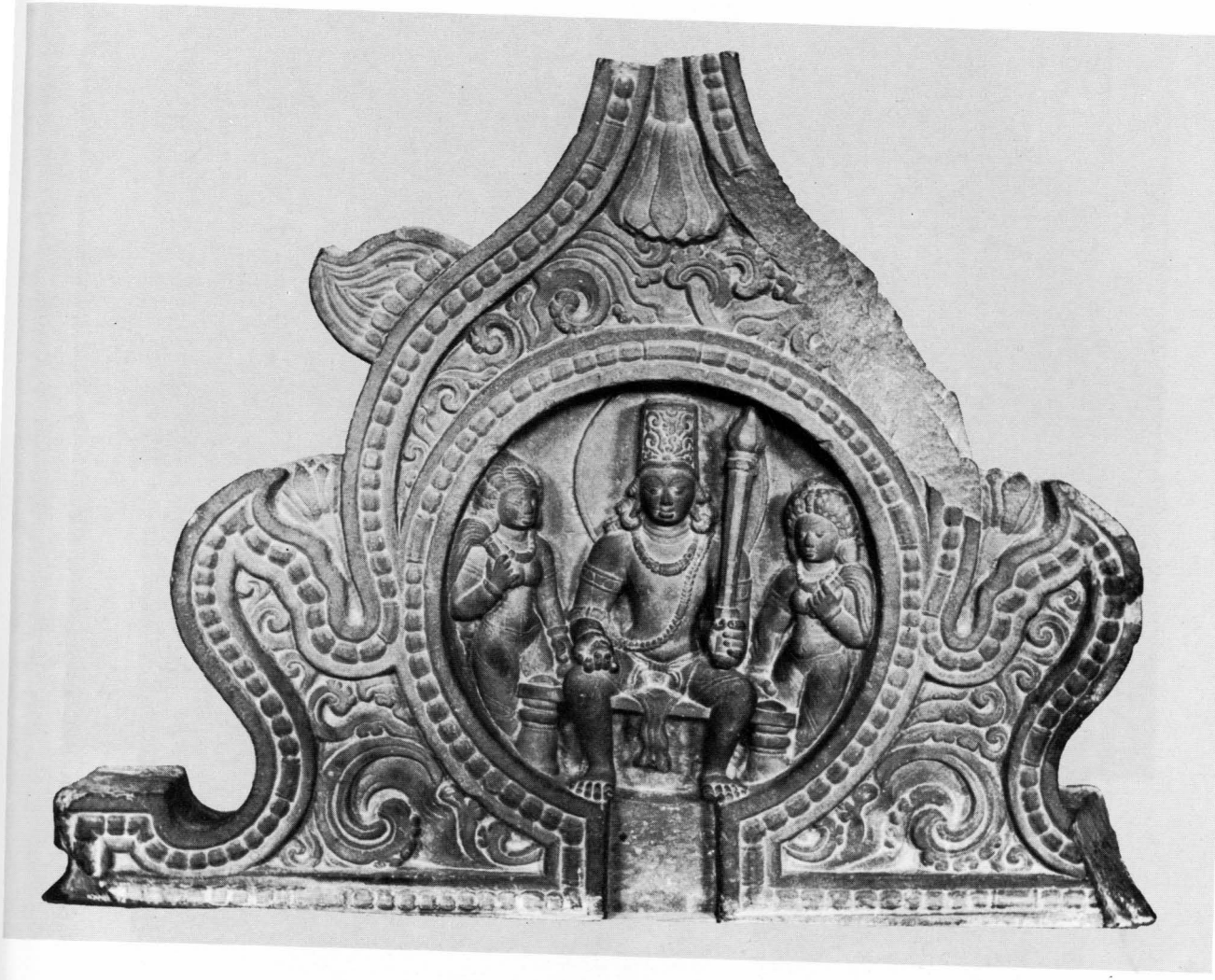
61. Hāritī, Mathura Museum (India), ca. A.D. 200.

62. Royal Portrait (?), Mrigasthali, now in the National Museum (Kathmandu), early 4th century.

63. Viṣṇu, Lucknow Museum (India), 4th century.



64. Royal Portrait (?), Pashupatinath, late 4th century.

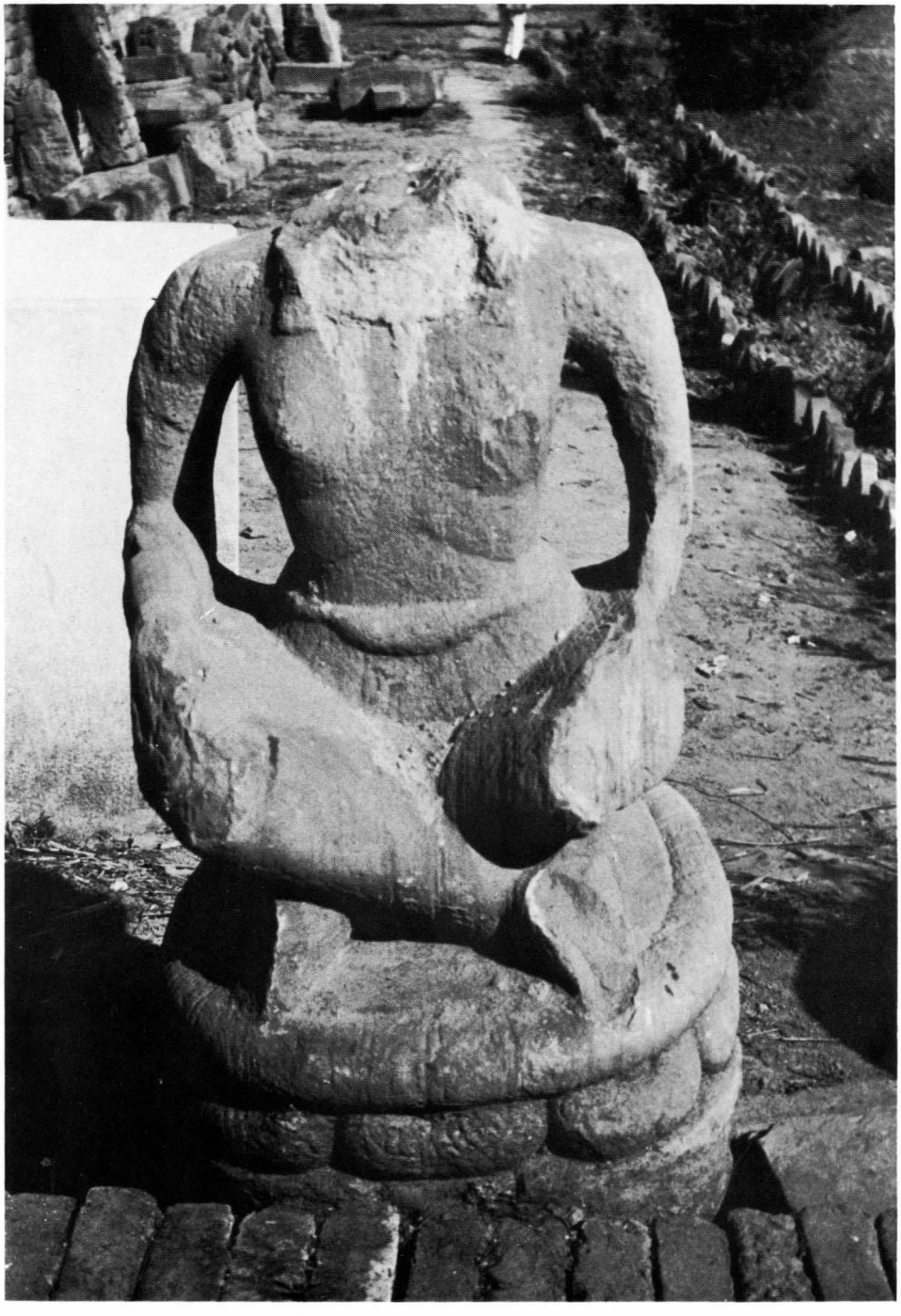


65. Yama, Bhumara (India), 6th century.

66. Varuṇa (?), National Museum (Kathmaṇḍu), 6th century.

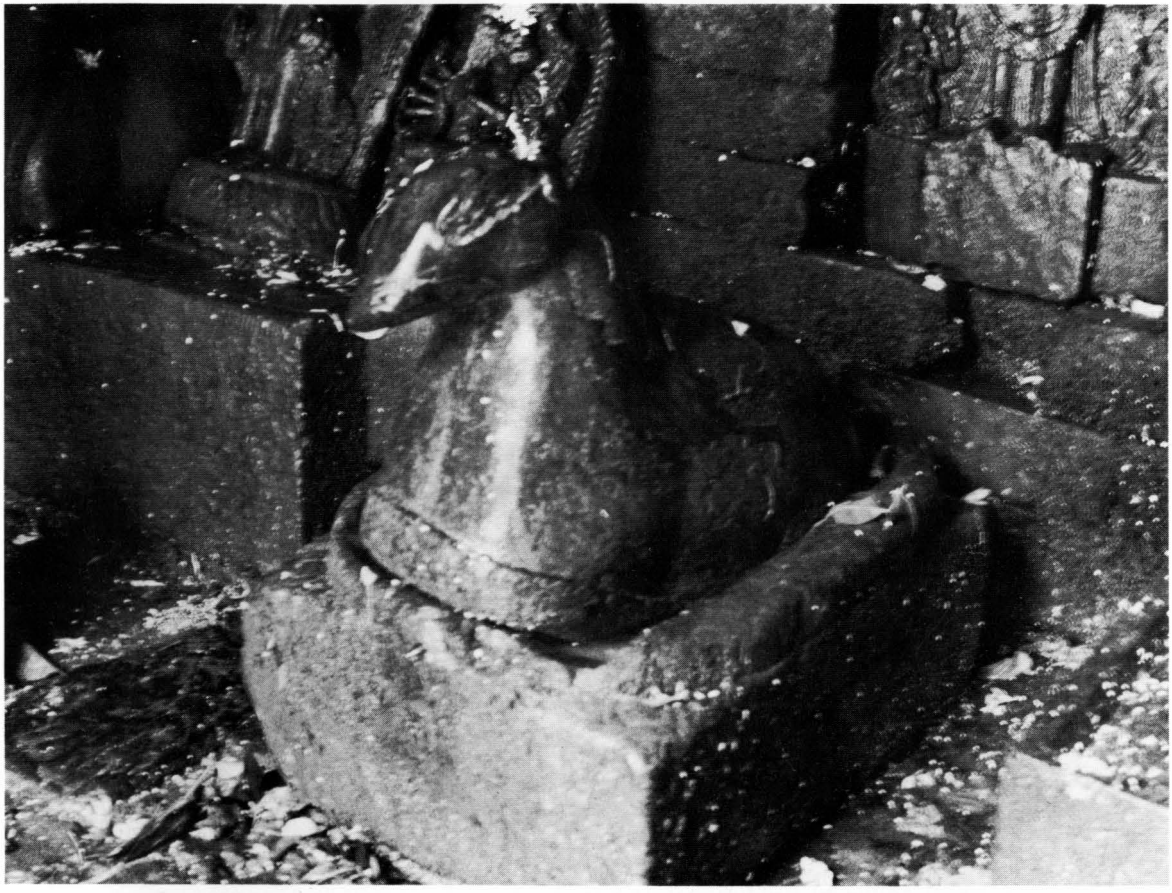
67. Vāsuki, Kumbheśvara Temple, 4th century.

68. Detail of Fig. 67.



69. Nāgarāja, Patan, 6th century.

70. Nāgarāja Vāsuki, Kathmandu, 10th century (?).



71. Deer, Pashupatinath, Date Uncertain.

72. Unidentified Figure, Mrigasthali, 4th century or earlier (?).

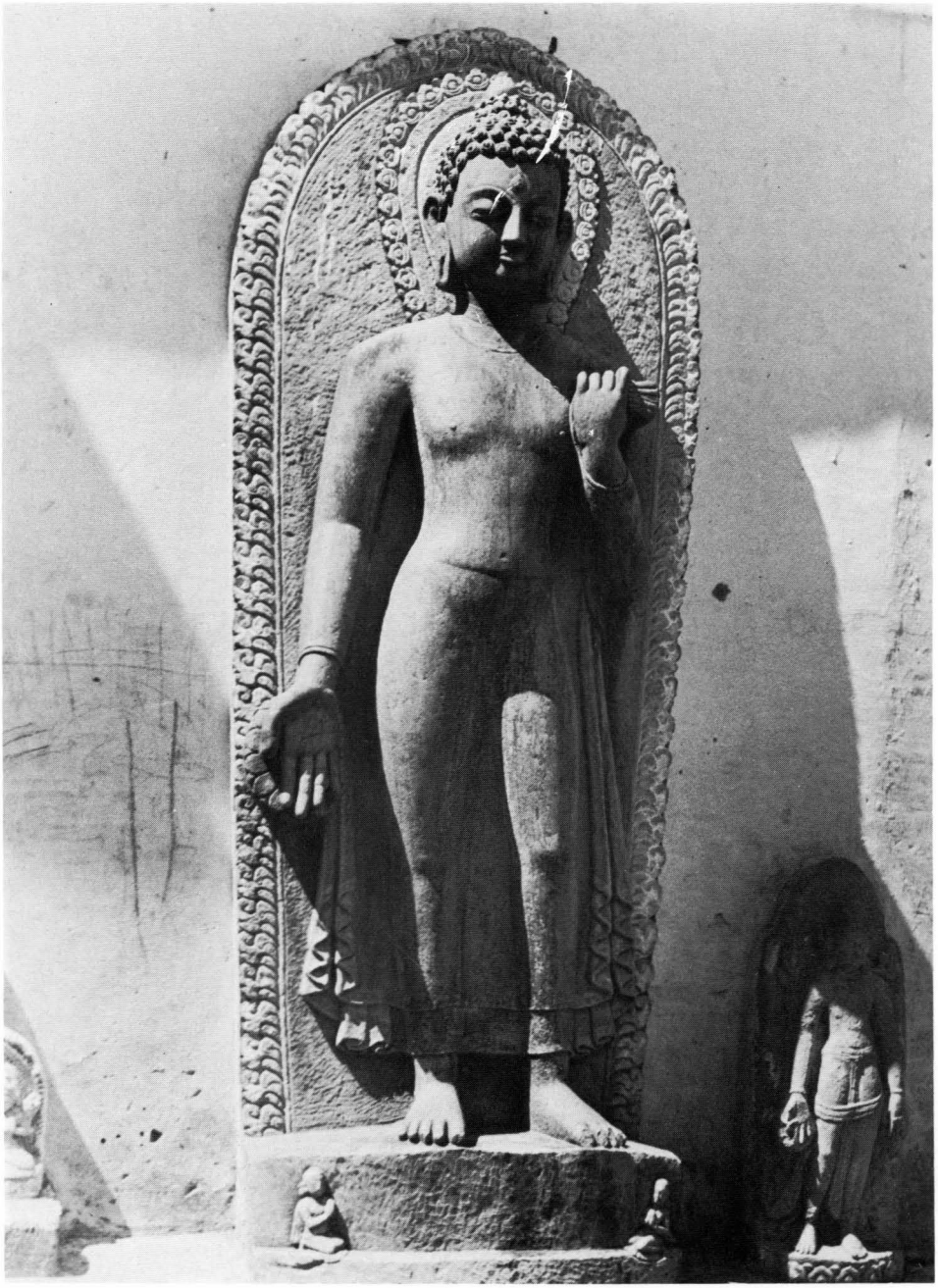
73. Rear View of Fig. 72.

74. Śiva, Hyu tole (Kathmandu), ca. A.D. 400.

75. Virupākṣa, Pashupatinath, 6th century (?).

76. Detail of Fig. 75.

77. Licchavi caitya, Svayambhunath.



78. Buddha, Svayambunath, 17th century.

79. Buddha, Patan, 6th-7th century.

80. Bust of Viṣṇu, Harigaon, 7th century (?).

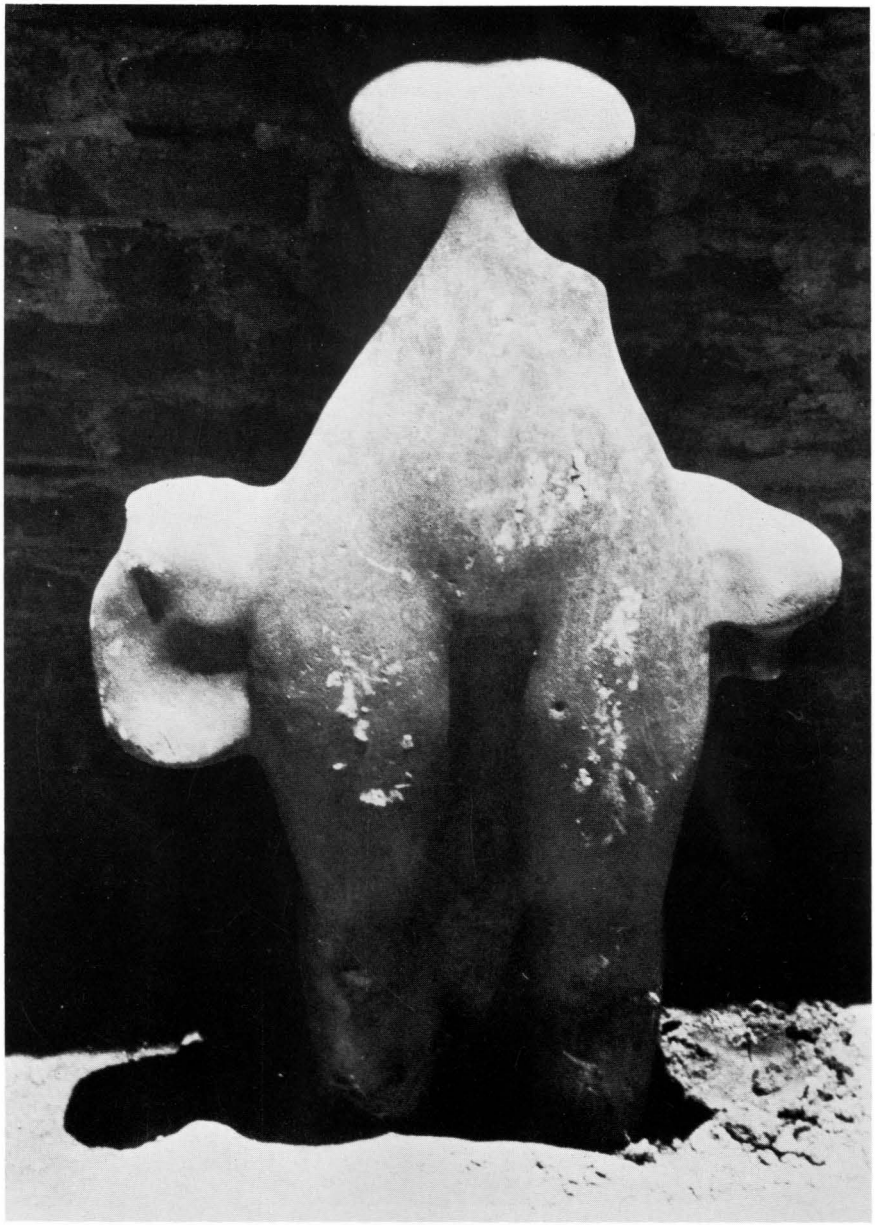
81. Viṣṇu, Mathura, 6th century.

82. Fragment of Pillar, Pashupatinath, 7th century.

83. Head of Śiva, National Museum (Kathmandu), 6th century.

84. Gaṇa, Deo Patan, 8th century (?).

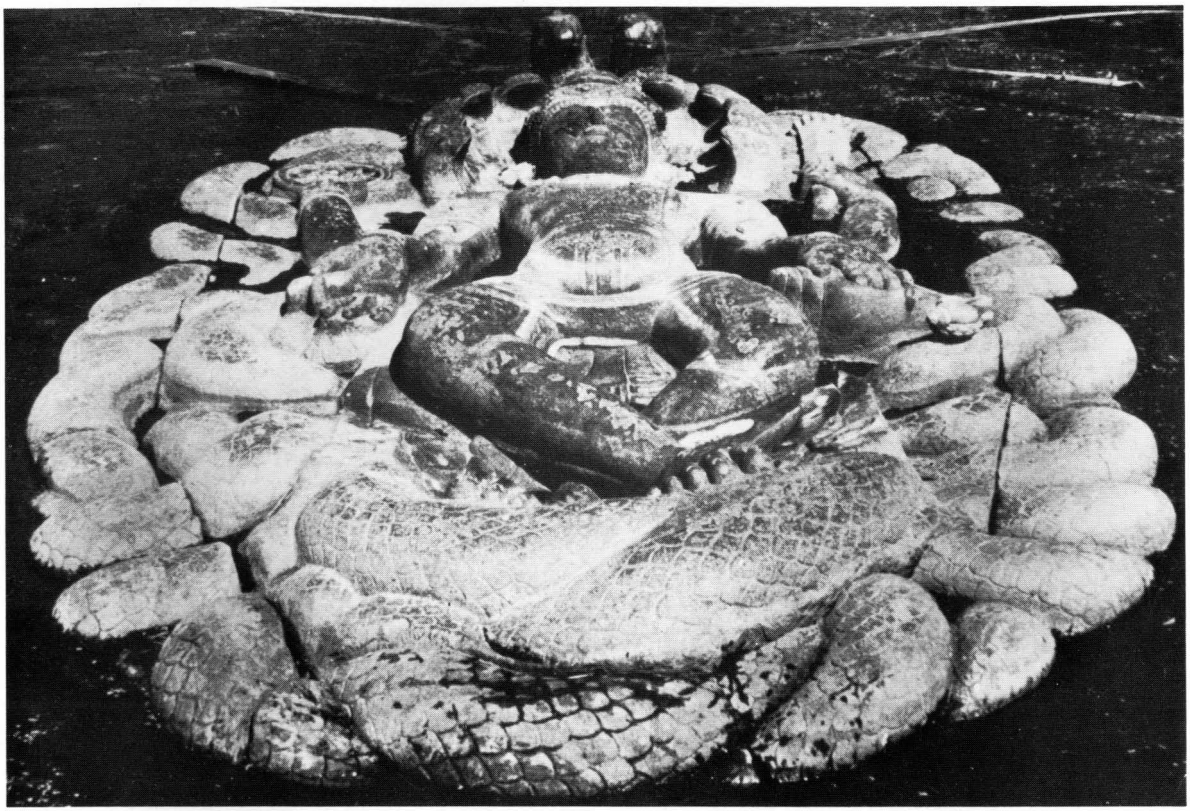
85. Devī, Deo Patan, now Coll. Stella Kramrisch (Philadelphia), 6th century.



86. Female Torso, Mrigasthali, 4th-5th century (?).

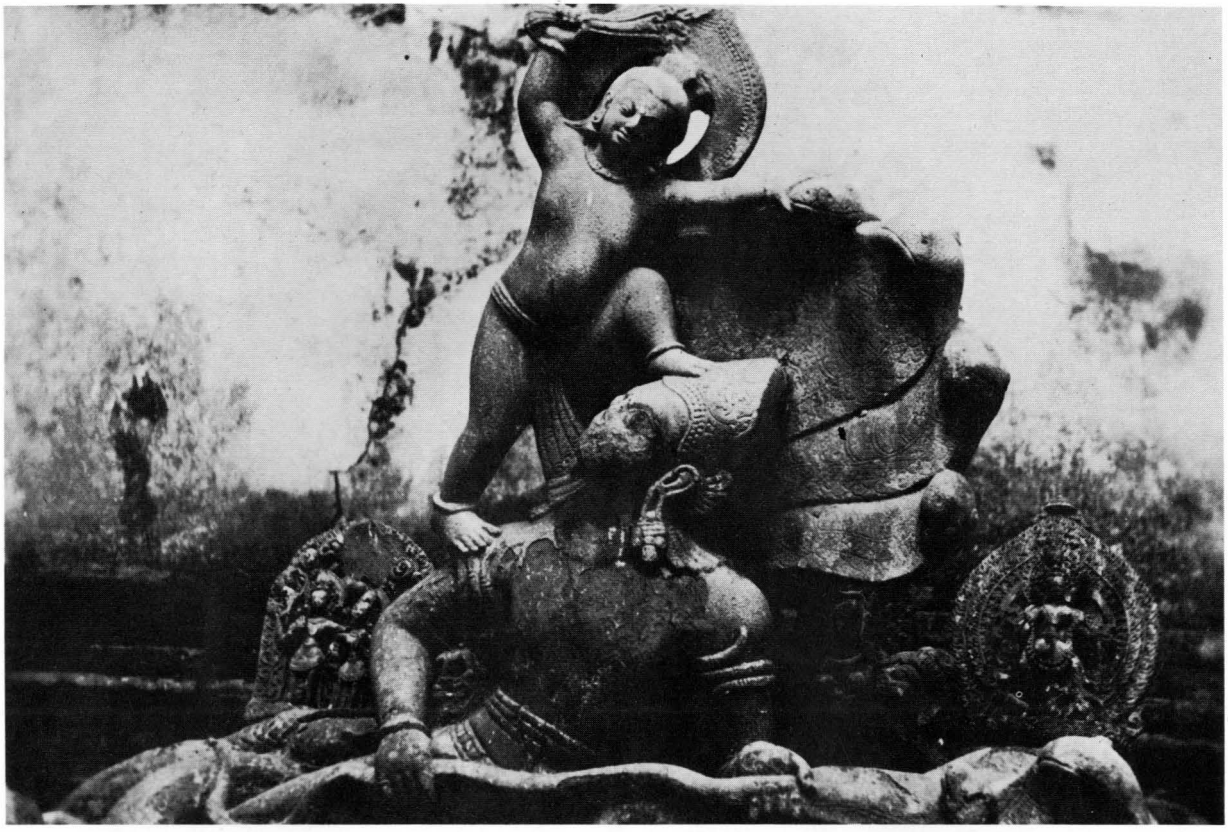
87. Nativity of the Buddha, Deo Patan, 10th-13th century (?).

88. Nativity of the Buddha, Bihar, Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund, 9th century.



89. Jalaśayana Viṣṇu, Hanuman Dhoka (Kathmandu), ca. A.D. 600.

90. Kālīyadamana, Hanuman Dhoka, 7th century.



91. Detail of Fig. 90.

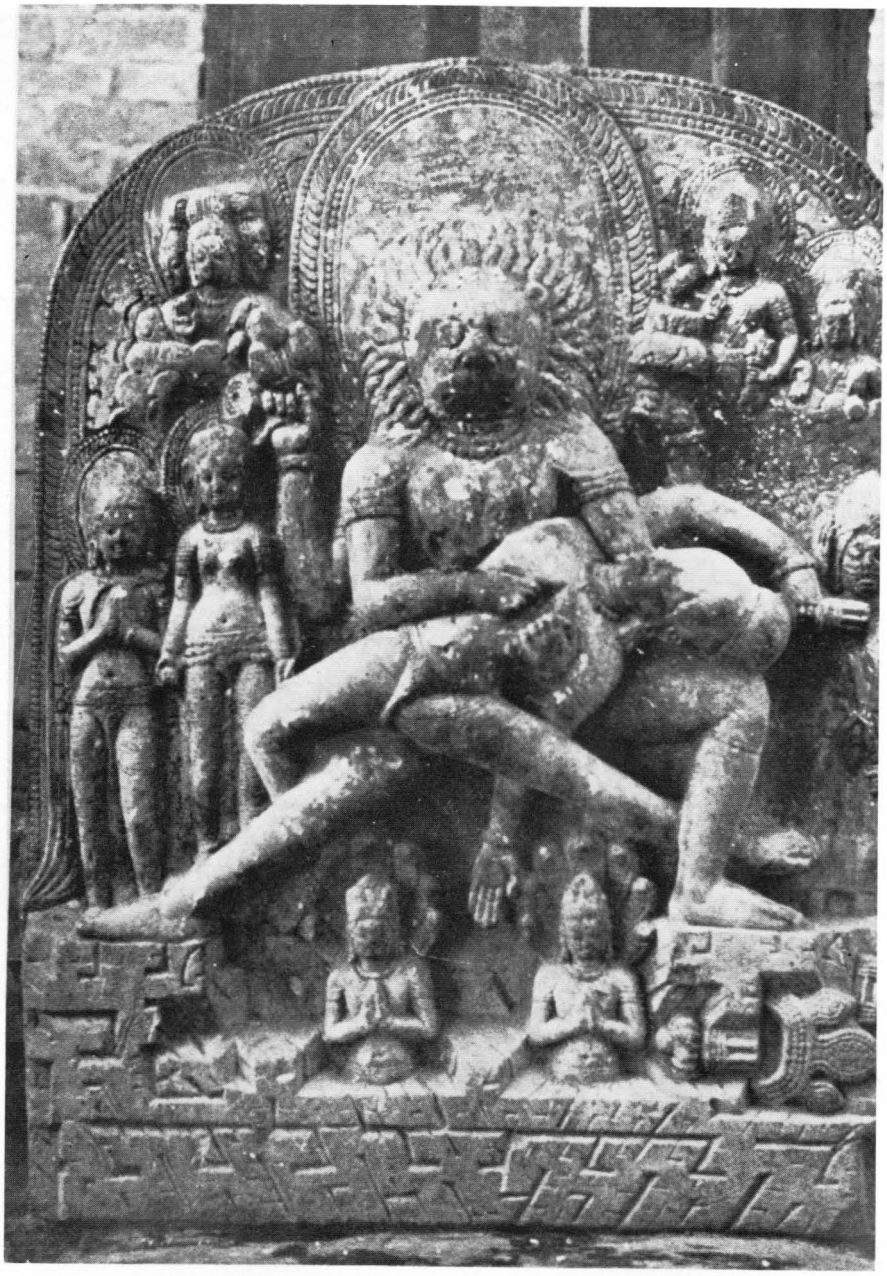
92. Varāha, Dhumvarahi, Early 7th century.

93. Varāha, Mathura, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 4th century.

94. Varāha, Bihar, Patna Museum, 7th century.

95. Varāha, Siddhapokhri (Bhadgaon), ca. A.D. 500.

96. Vāmana, Coll. H. K. Swali (Bombay), 7th century.



97. Narasiṁha, Changu Narayan, 13th century.

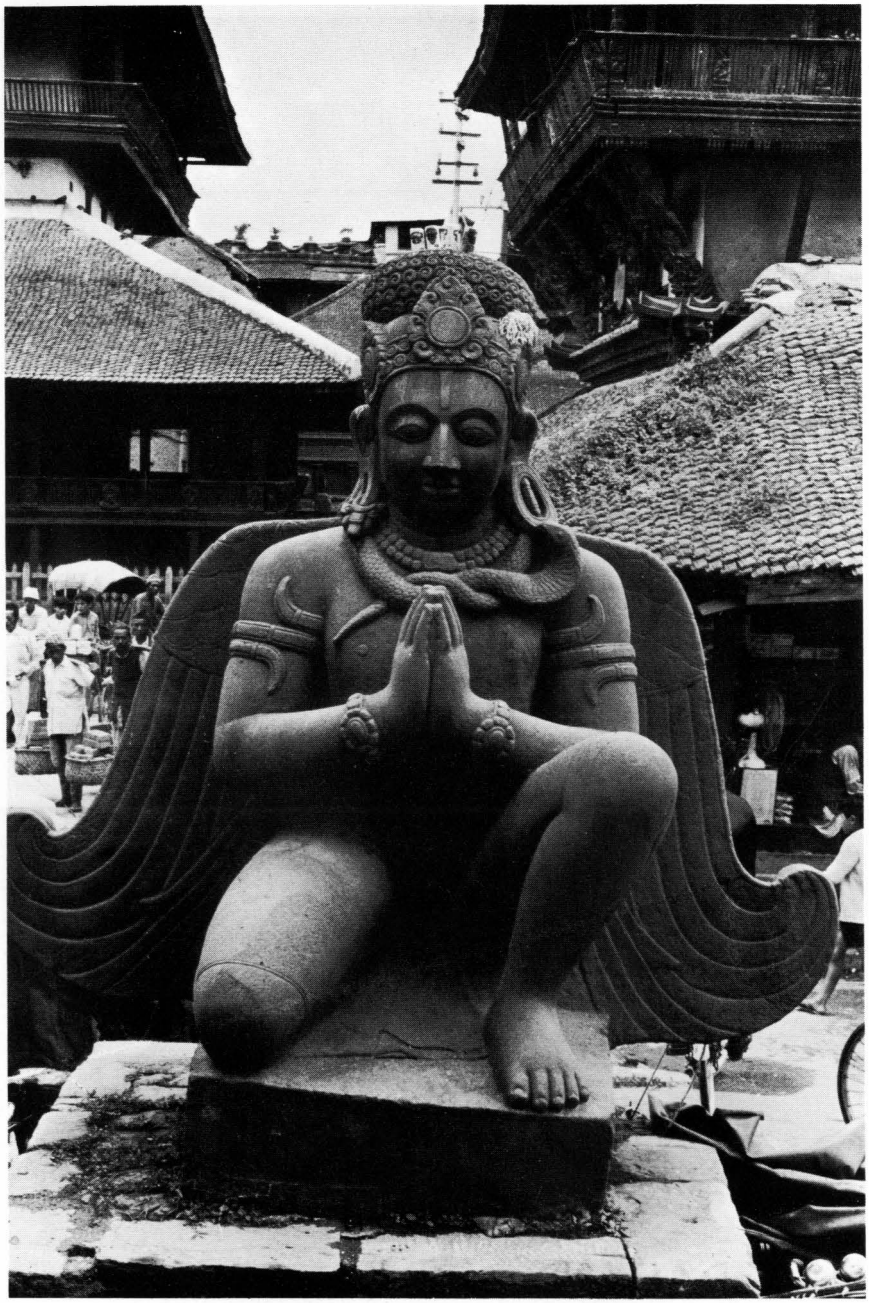
98. Garuḍa, Changu Narayan, 6th-7th century.

99. Garuḍa, Makhan tole (Kathmandu), 6th century.

100. Rear View of Fig. 99.

101. Garuḍa, Harigaon, 7th-8th century.

102. Garuḍa, Narayanhiti (Kathmandu), 8th century.

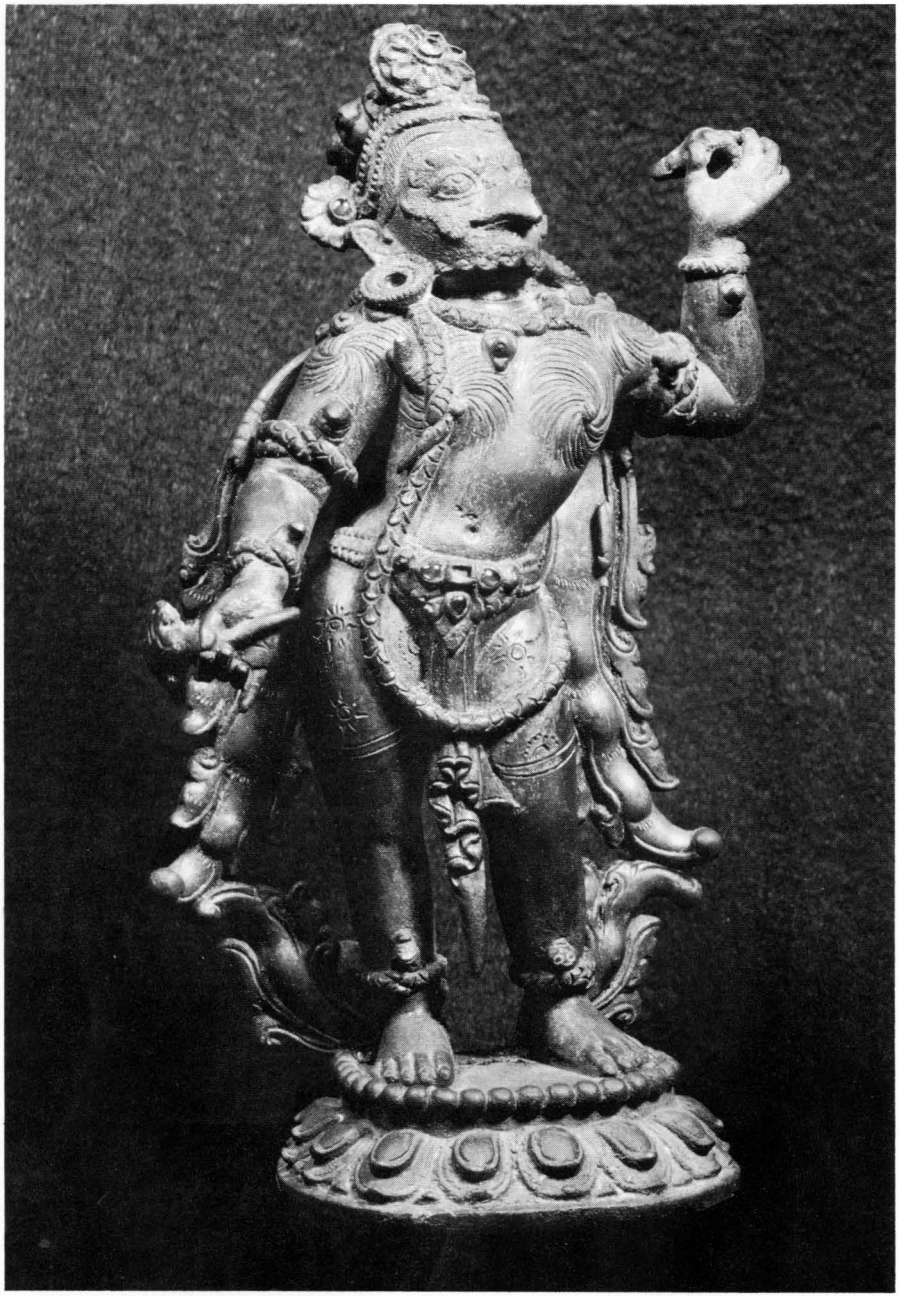


103. Garuḍa, Maru tole (Kathmandu), A.D. 1690.

104. Garuḍa, Hyu tole, A.D. 1641.

105. Portrait of a Donor, Uku bahal (Patan), 19th century.

106. Garuḍa, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 16th century.



107. Garuḍa, Coll. Alice Heeramaneck (New York), 15th-16th century.

108. Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 7th-8th century.

109. Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu, Changu Narayan, 9th century.

110. Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu, Deo Patan, 11th century.

111. Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu, Changu Narayan, 13th century.

112. Garuḍāsana Viṣṇu, Bihar (India), Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund, 6th century.

113. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, Changu Narayan, 9th century.

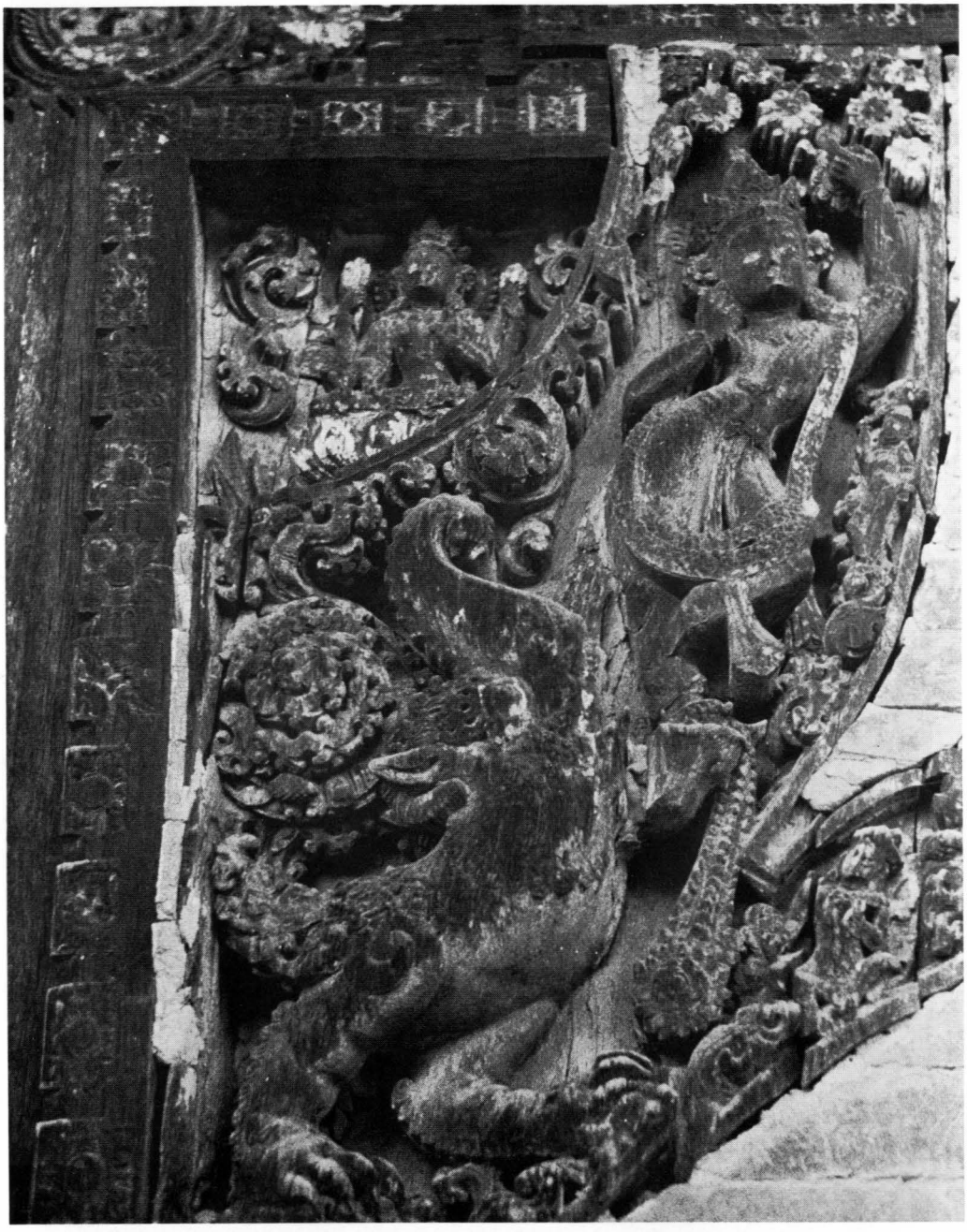
114. Viśvarūpa Viṣṇu, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Keith McLeod Fund, 10th century.

115. Harihara, Saugal, 7th century.

116. Viṣṇu, Naksal, 9th century.

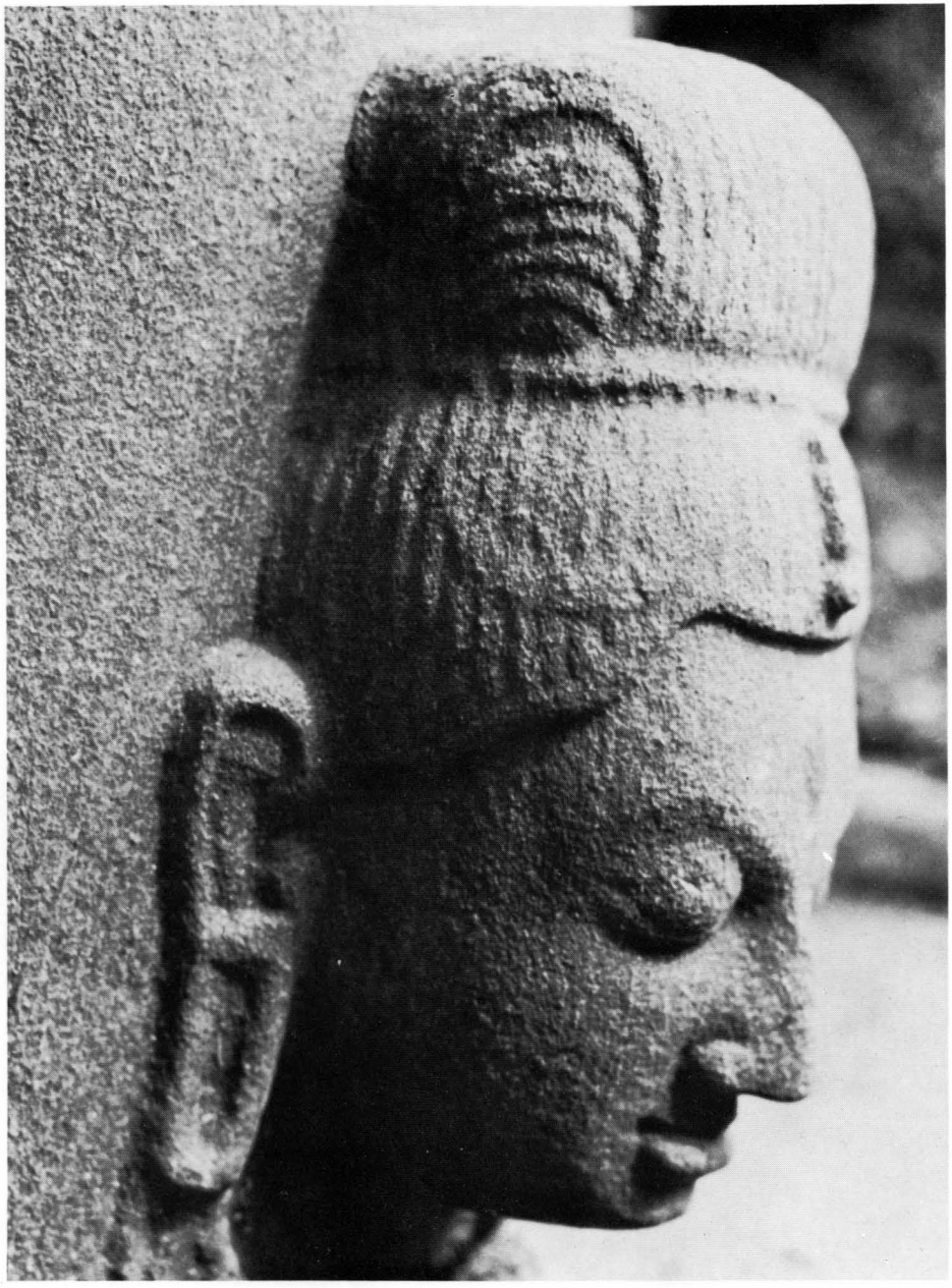
117. Viṣṇu, Changu Narayan, 10th century.

118. Viṣṇu, National Museum (Kathmandu), 14th century.



119. Architectural Detail, Changu Narayan, 17th century.

120. Architectural Detail, Changu Narayan, 17th century.



121. Ekamukhaliṅga, Mrigasthali, ca. A.D. 500.

122. Mukhaliṅga, Khoh (India), 5th century.

123. Caturmukhaliṅga, Coll. Samuel Wagstaff (Detroit), 9th century.

124. Caturmukhaliṅga, Pashupatinath, 9th century.

125. Caturmukhaliṅga, Jung Bahadur's Temple, Pashupatinath, 11th century.

126. Caturmukhaliṅga, Harigaon, 12th century.

127. Caturmukhaliṅga, Deo Patan, 14th century.

128. Umā-Maheśvara, Archeological Garden, Patan, 7th century.

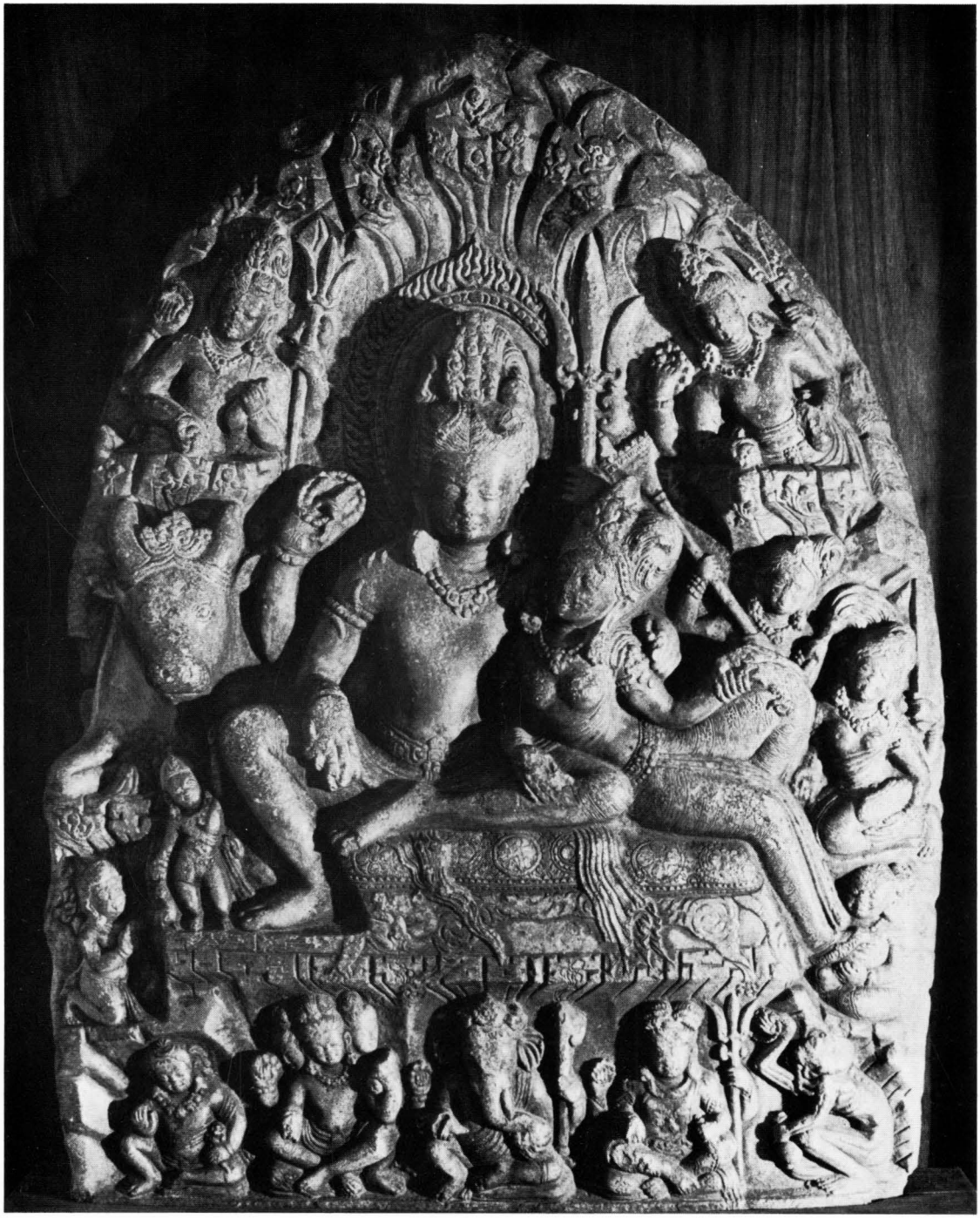
129. Umā-Maheśvara, Mrigasthali, 7th century.

130. Umā-Maheśvara, Dugahiti (Sankhu), 8th century.

131. Umā-Maheśvara, Chuping ghat (Bhadgaon), 9th century (?).

132. Umā-Maheśvara, Pashupatinath, 9th century.

133. Umā-Maheśvara, Coll. J. D. Rockefeller 3rd (New York), early 10th century.



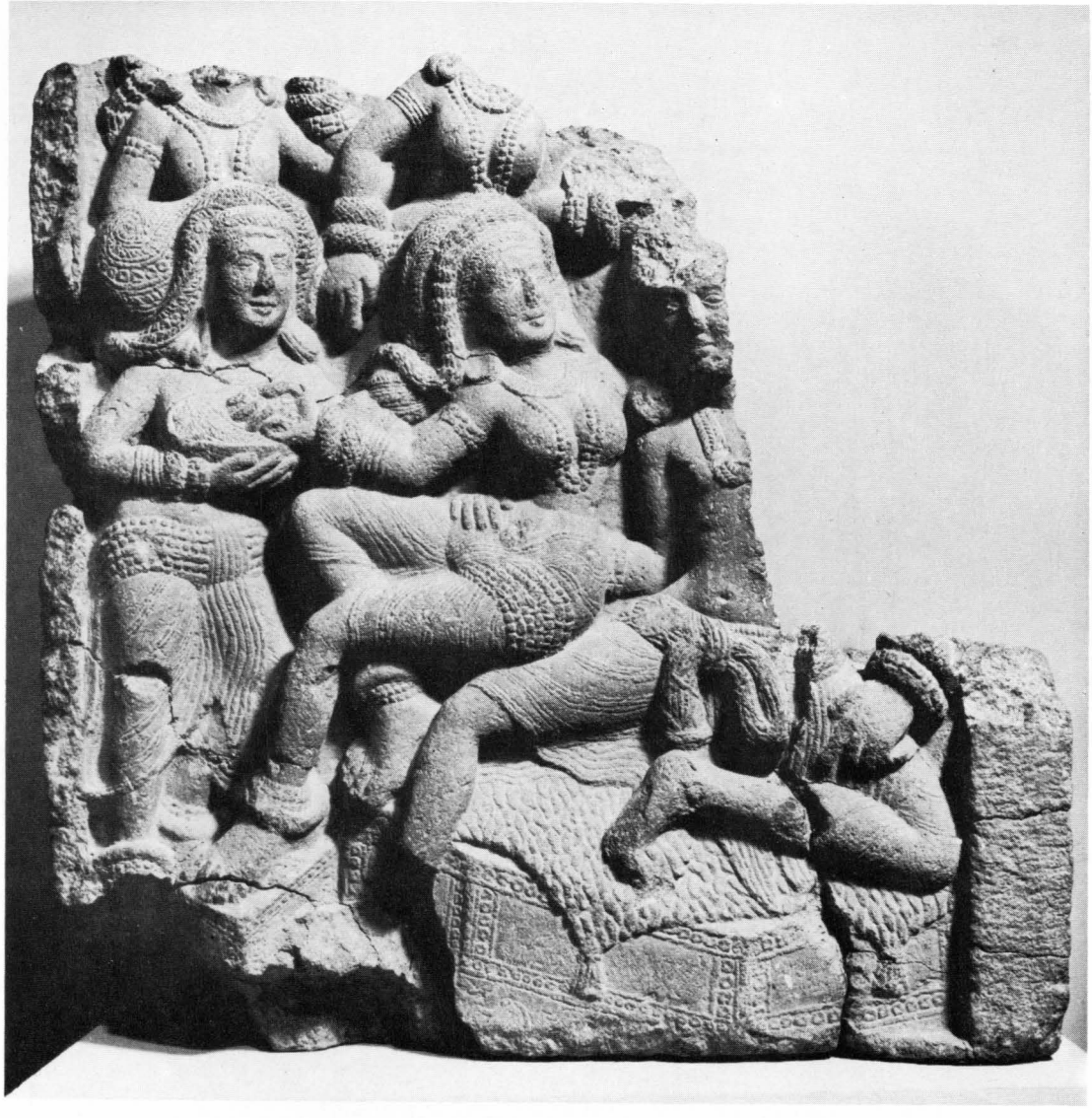
134. Umā-Maheśvara, Coll. Harold P. Ullman (Los Angeles), 10th century.

135. Umā-Maheśvara, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Marshall, H. Gould and Frederick L. Jack Funds), 14th century.

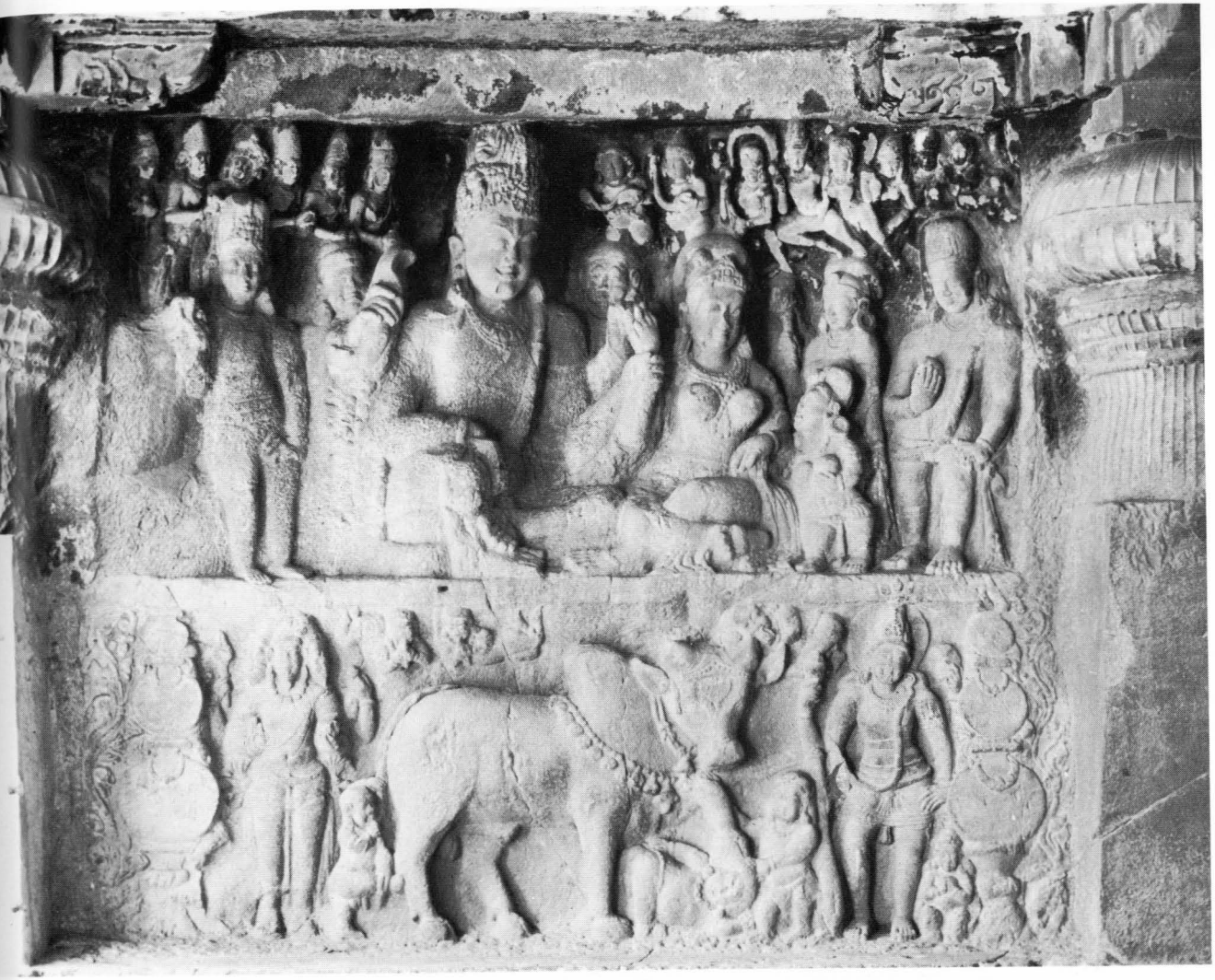
136. Umā-Maheśvara, Bhagavatī Temple (Bhadgaon), 14th century.

137. Umā-Maheśvara, Coll. H. K. Swali, 15th-16th century.

138. Umā-Maheśvara, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 16th century.



139. Mithuna, Pithalkhora, 1st c. B.C.



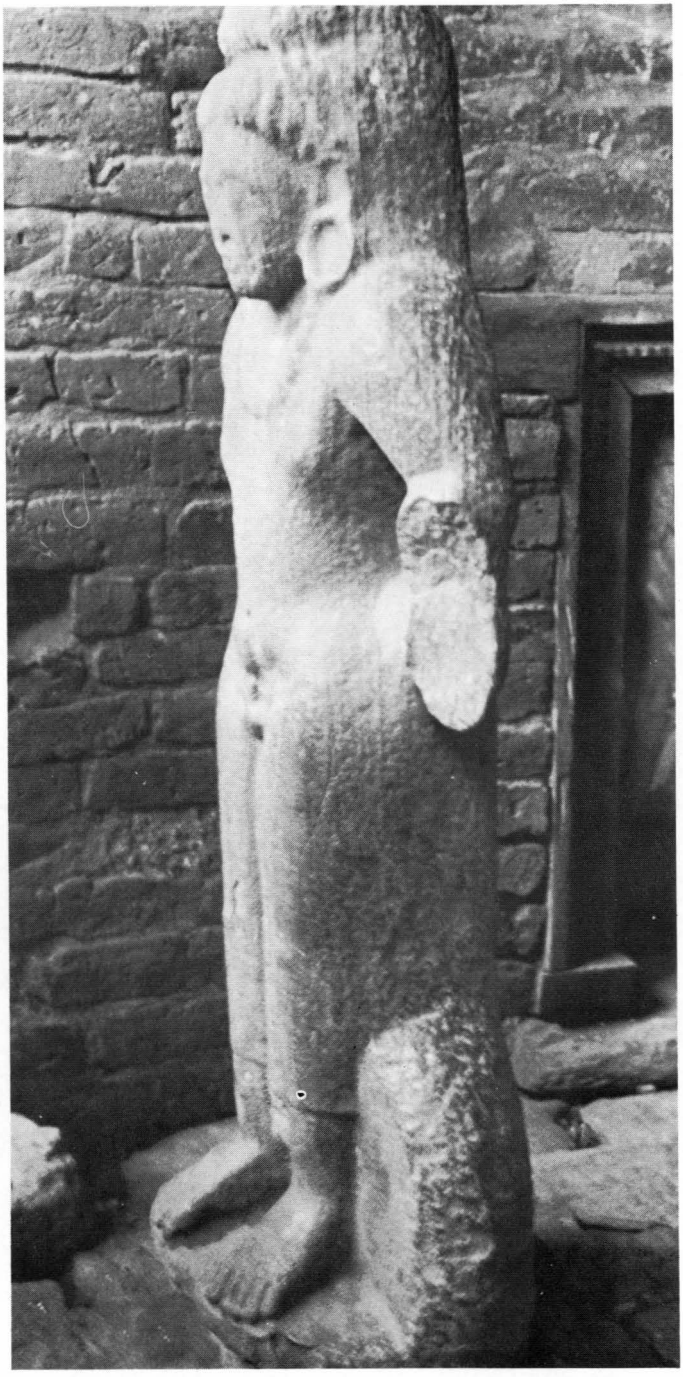
140. Umā and Maheśvara playing Dice, Ellora (India), 7th century.

141. Kārttikeya, Mathura, Doris Wiener Gallery (New York), 6th century.

142. Śiva-Pārvatī, Visalnagar, 8th century.

143. Śiva-Pārvatī, Kumbheśvara Temple, 12th century.

144. Śiva-Pārvatī, Gairidhara (Patan), 17th century.



145. Śiva, Bāghbhairava Temple (Kirtipur), 6th century.

146. Detail of Fig. 145.

147. Architectural Fragment showing dancing Gaṇas, Patan, 11th century.

148. Detail of Fig. 147.

149. Śaiva Attendant, Deo Patan, 10th century.

150. Arddhanārīśvara, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From The Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 10th century.

151. Bhairava, Doris Wiener Gallery, 10th century.

152. Vaṭuka Bhairava, Bharat Kala Bhavan (Varanasi), 17th century.

153. Śrīkaṇṭha with Śakti, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Harriet Otis Croft Fund, 17th century.

154. Dancing Bhairava, National Museum (Kathmandu), 15th century.

155. Licchavi Caitya, Cha bahil (Deo Patan), 6th century.

156. Section of a Licchavi caitya, Cha bahil, 6th-7th century.

157. Architectural Fragment, Lucknow Museum (India), 6th century.

158. Fragmentary Relief, Cha bahil, 7th-8th century.

159. Fragmentary Relief, Cha bahil, 7th-8th century.

160. Fragmentary Relief, Cha bahil, 7th-8th century.

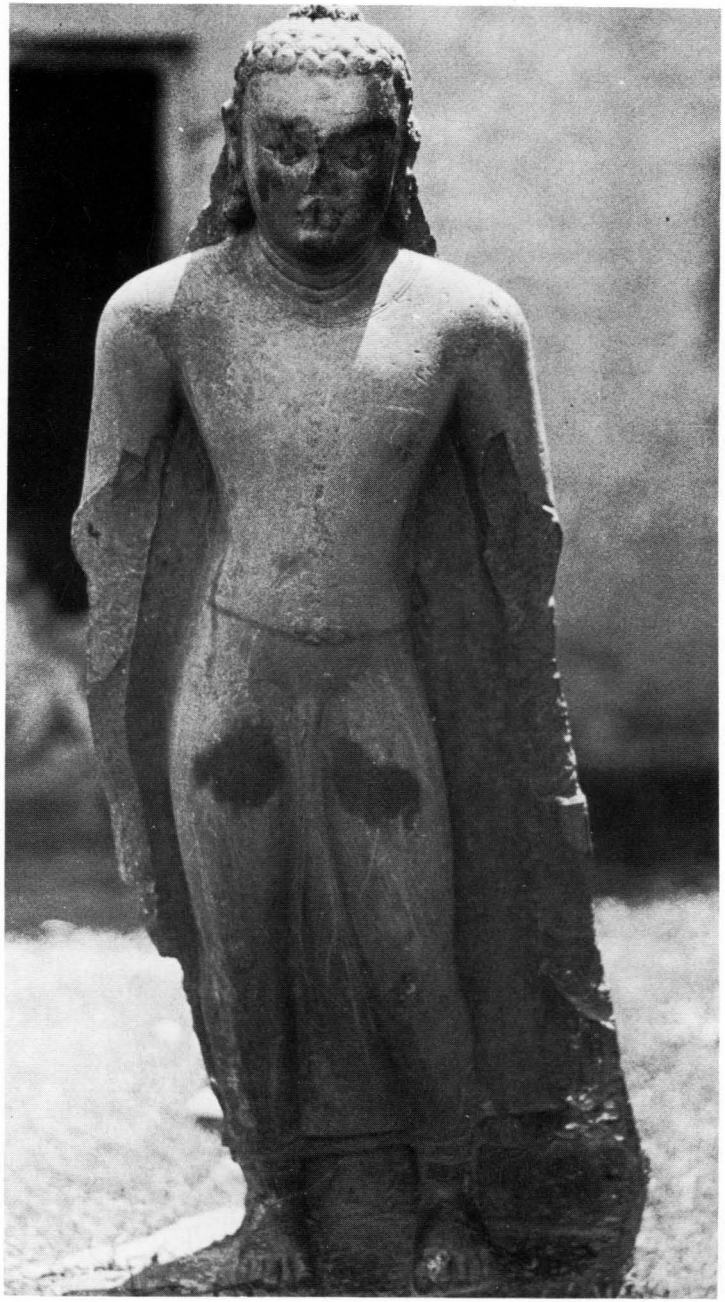
161. Fragmentary Relief, Cha bahil, 7th-8th century.

162. Buddhist Relief, Tukan bahal (Kathmandu), 8th century.

163. Buddhist Relief, Tukan bahal, 8th century.

164. Buddhist Relief, Tukan bahal, 8th century.

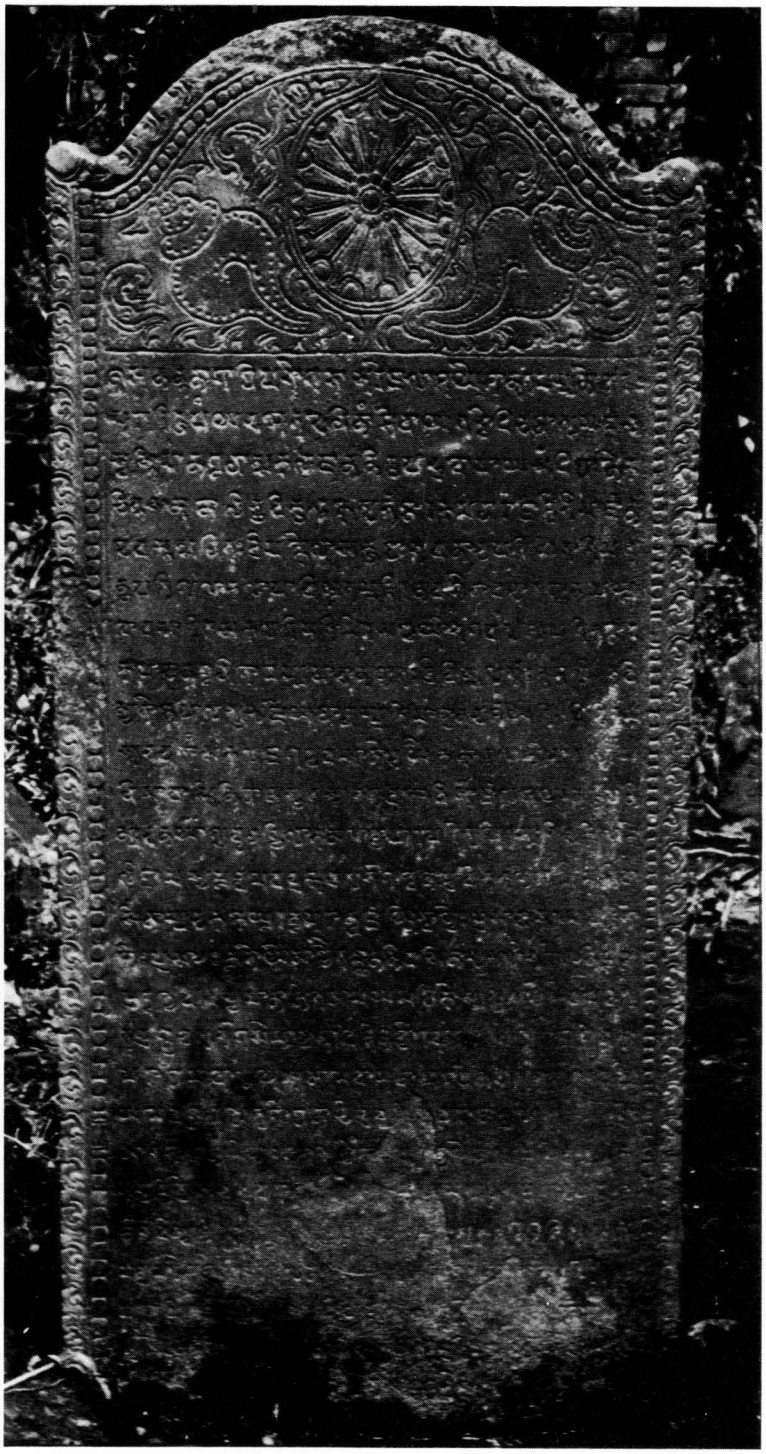
165. Architectural Fragment, National Museum (Kathmandu), 6th century.



166. Buddha, Cha bahil, 6th century.

167. Buddha, Bangemura (Kathmandu), 6th century.

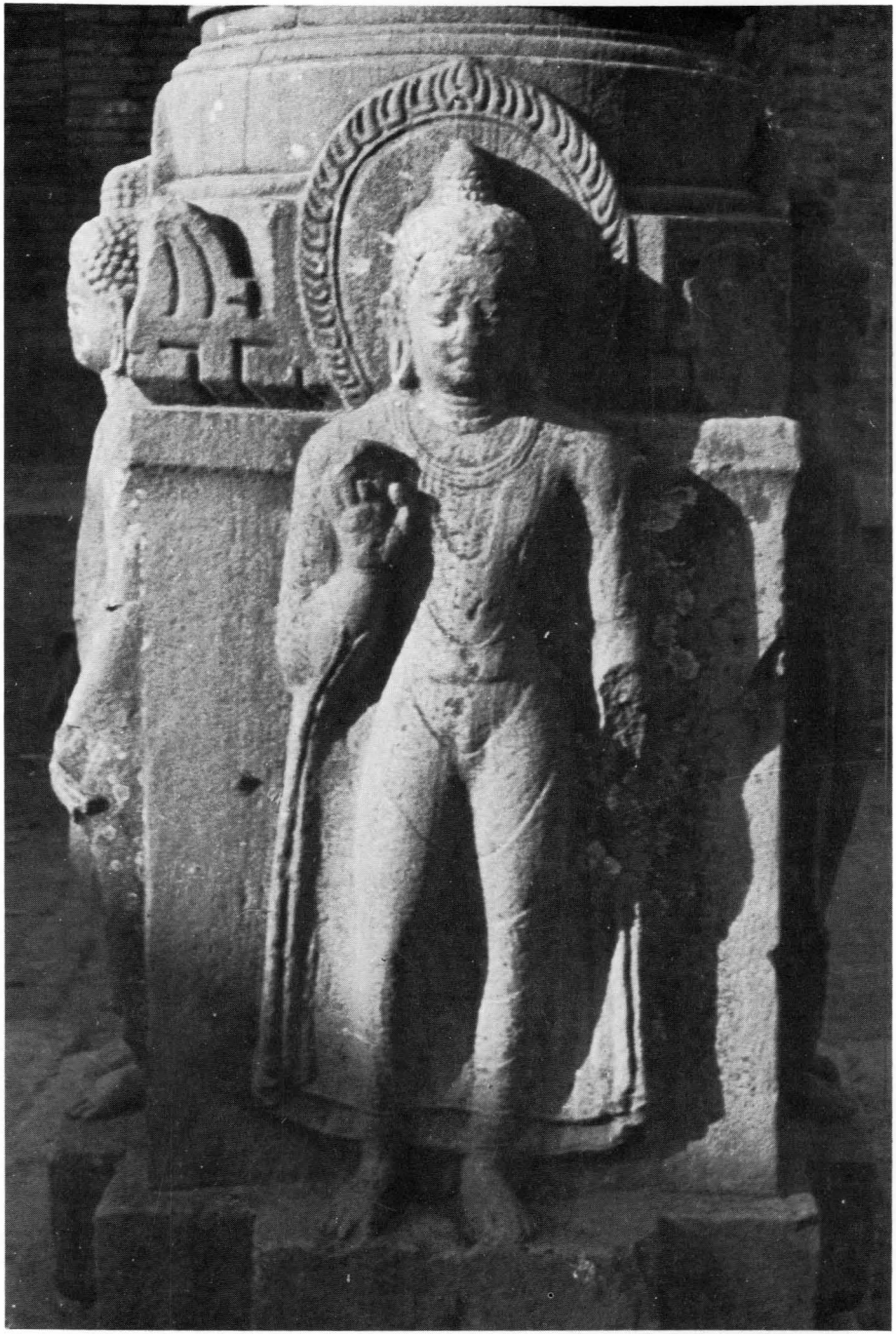
168. Buddha, Harigaon, 6th century.



169. Bhīmārjunadeva-Viṣṇugupta Edict, Yangalhiti (Kathmandu), A.D. 642.

170. Licchavi Caitya, Cha bahil, 9th century.

171. Buddha, Naga baha (Patan), 8th century.



172. Buddha, Tham bahil, 10th-11th century.

173. Buddha, British Museum, 9th-10th century.

174. Buddha, Coll. J. D. Rockefeller 3rd (New York), 10th century.

175. Buddha, Private Collection (U.S.A.), 11th century.

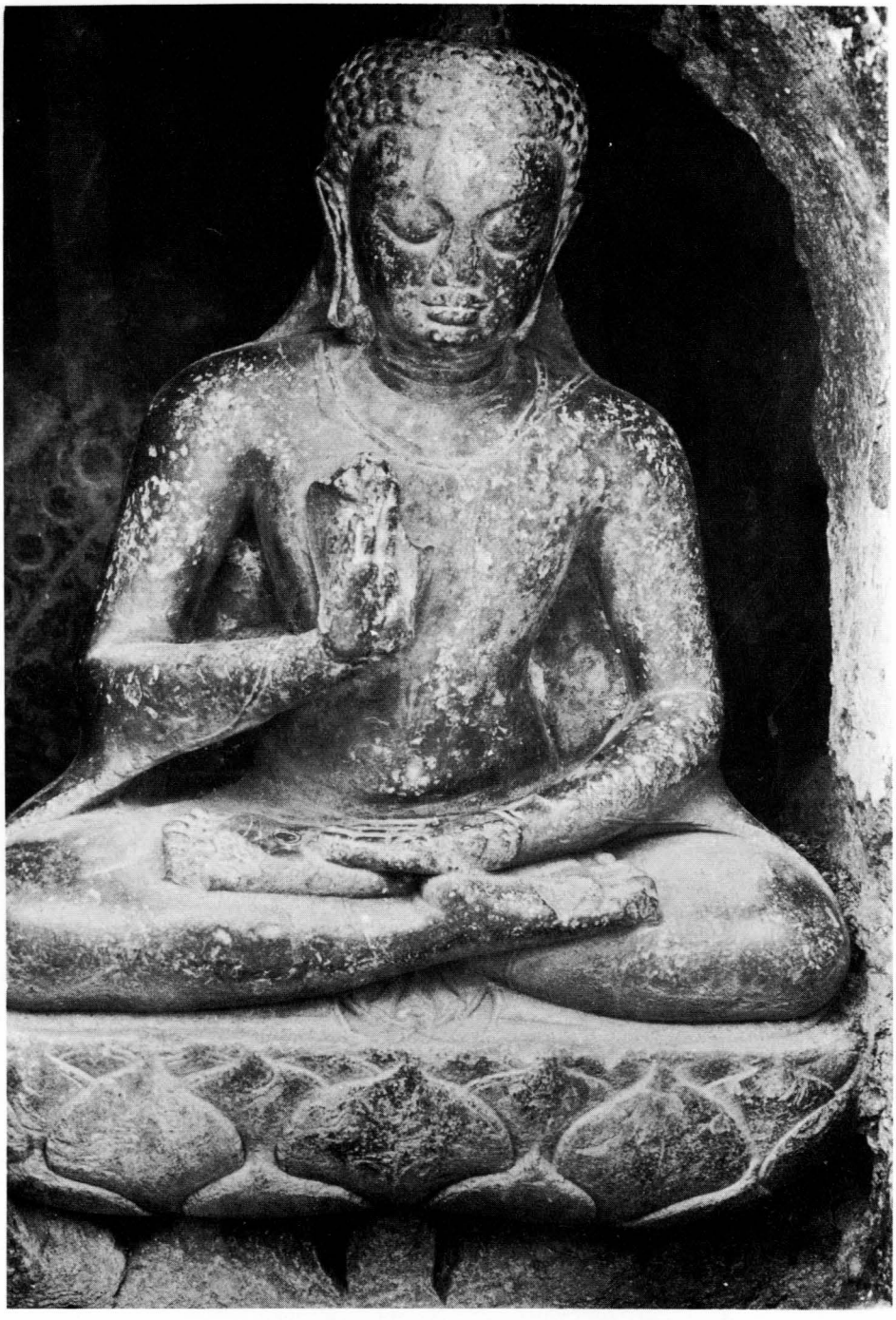
176. Buddha, Pashupatinath, 11th century.

177. Buddha with Bodhisattvas, Chapa tole (Patan). 6th century.

178. Buddha with Bodhisattvas, Siddhapokhri (Bhadgaon), 6th century.

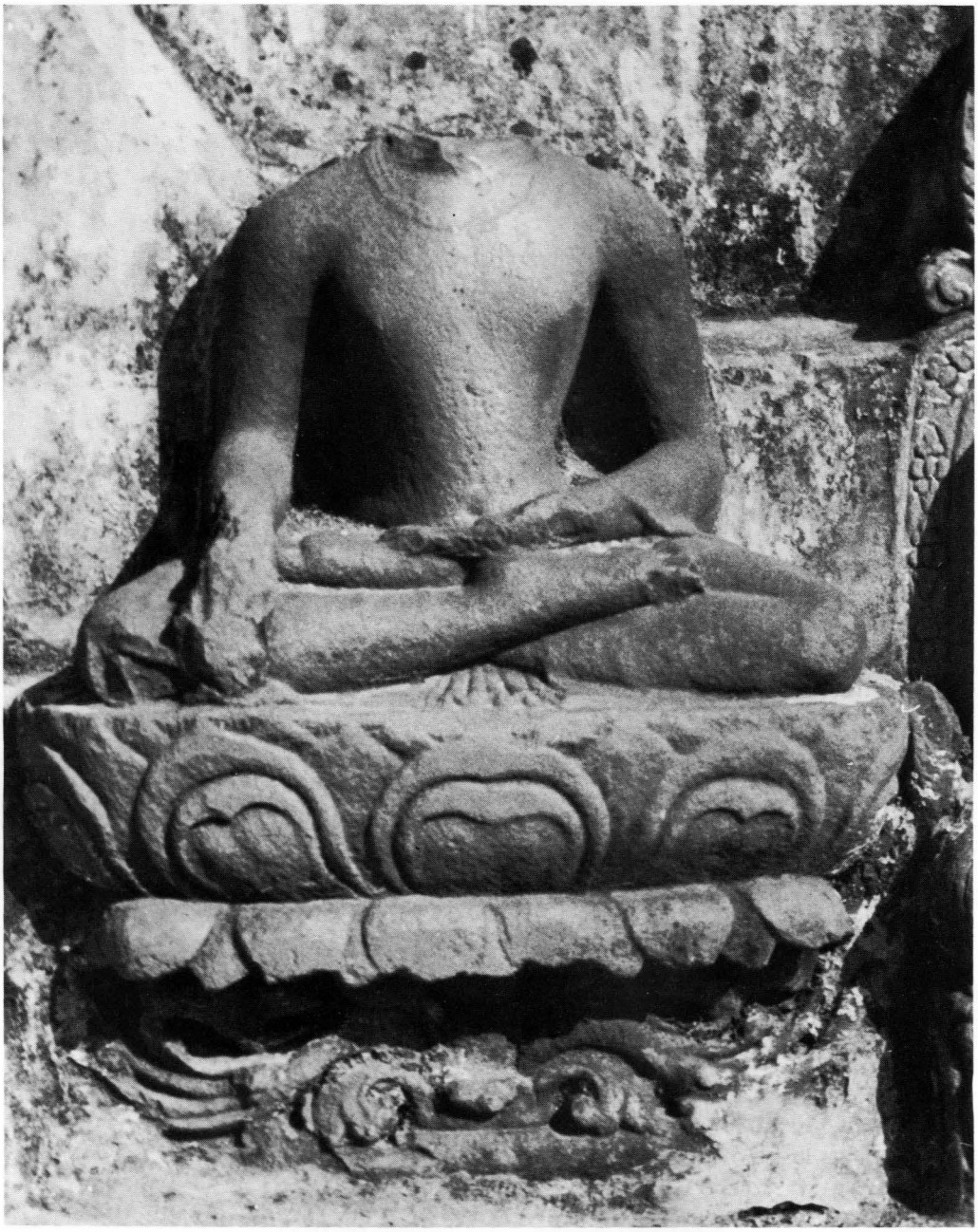
179. Fragment showing Māra's horde, National Museum (Kathmandu), 8th century.

180. Buddha's descent from the Tuṣita heaven, Patan, 10th century.



181. Buddha, Patan, 6th century.

182. Buddha with Bodhisattvas, Patan, 8th-9th century.



183. Buddha, Cha bahil, 10th century.

184. Buddha, Coll. F. Neustatter (Los Angeles), 11th century.

185. Buddha or Maitreya, British Museum, 11th century.

186. Buddha or Maitreya, Nalanda, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 9th century.

187. Avalokiteśvara, Cha bahil, ca. A.D. 800.

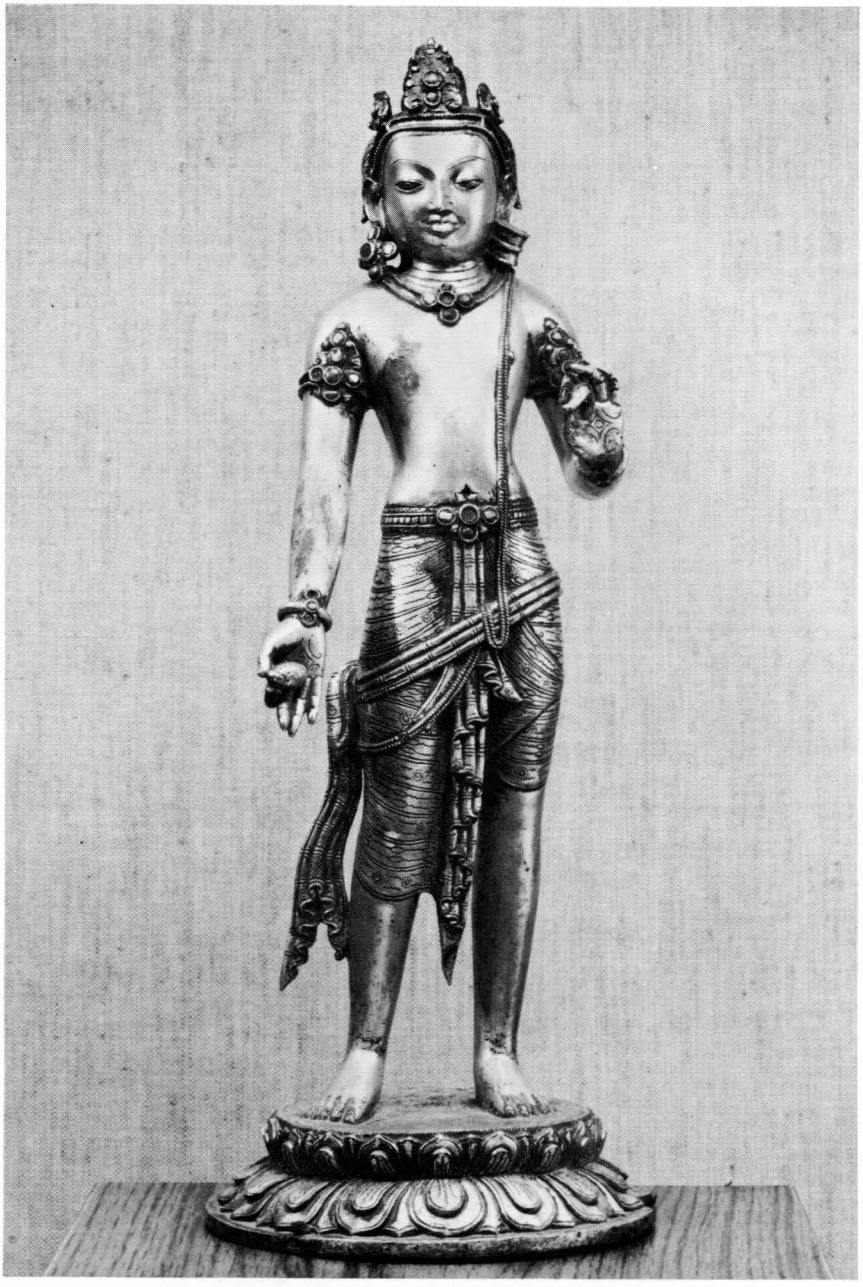
188. Avalokiteśvara, Kathesimbhu, early 9th century.

189. Avalokiteśvara, Kwa bahal, 9th-10th century.

190. Avalokiteśvara, Private Collection (U.S.A.), 9th-10th century.

191. Avalokiteśvara, Yampi baha (Patan), 10th century.

192. Avalokiteśvara, Private Collection (U.S.A.), 10th century.



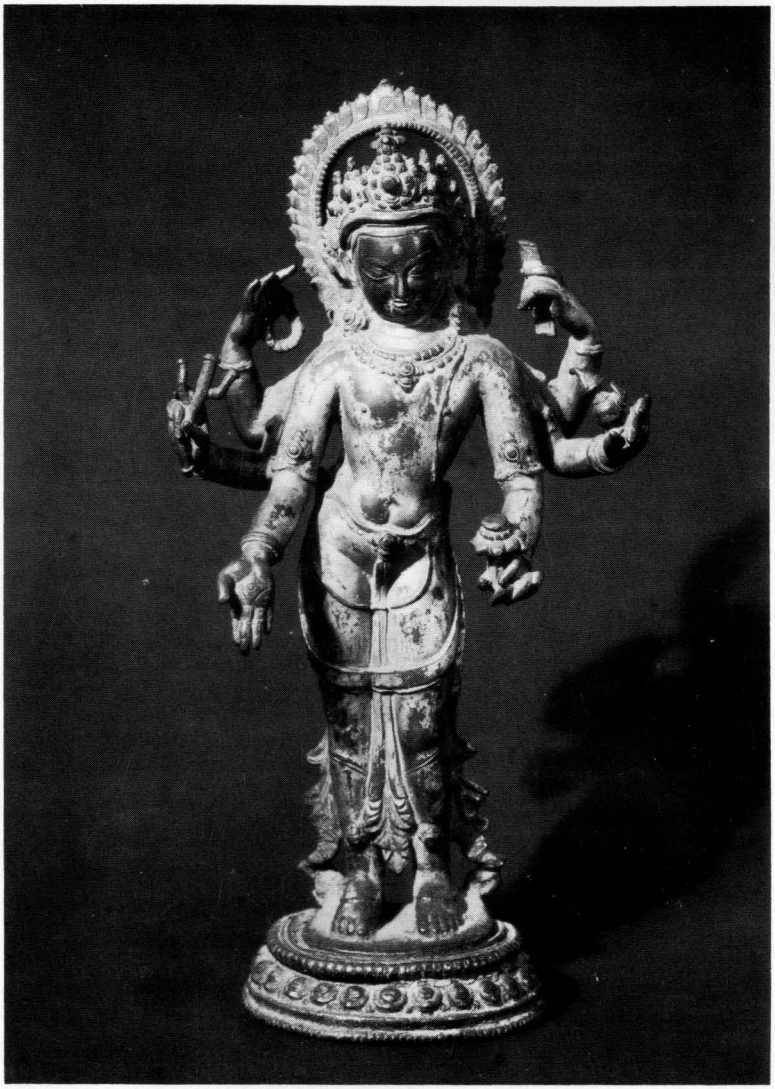
193. Avalokiteśvara, Doris Wiener Gallery, 11th century.

194. Avalokiteśvara, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 13th century.

195. Avalokiteśvara, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Ross-Coornaraswamy Collection, 14th century.

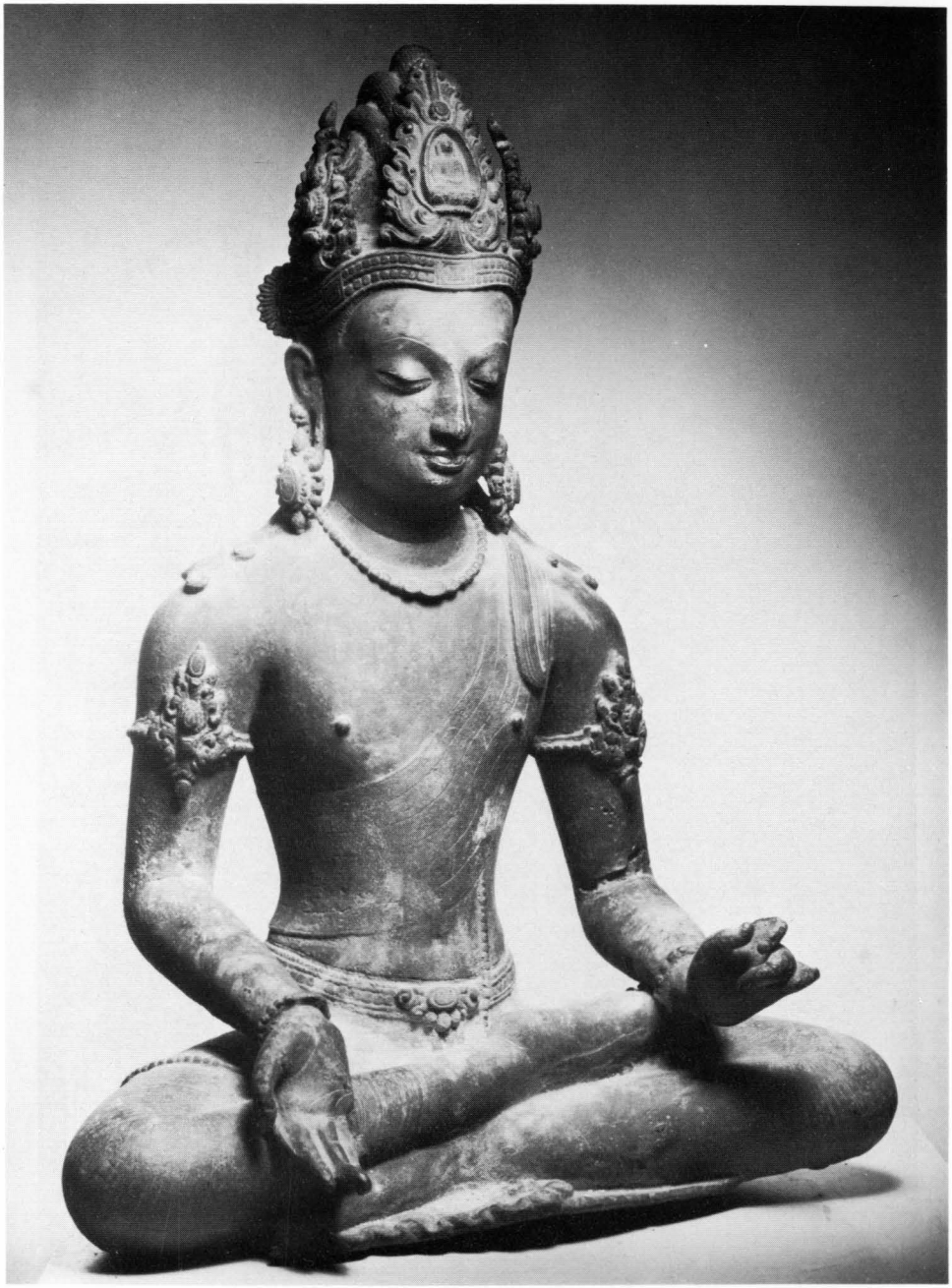
196. Avalokiteśvara, Kwa bahal, 14th century.

197. Avalokiteśvara, Deo Patan, 17th century.



198. Sugatisandarśana Lokeśvara, Cleveland Museum of Art, Edward L. Whittemore Fund, 15th century.

199. Siṁhanāda Avalokiteśvara, Cha bahil, 9th-10th century.



200. Avalokiteśvara, Kwa bahal, 12th century.

201. Vajrapāṇi, Private Collection (U.K.), 11th century.

202. Vajrapāṇi, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 8th century.

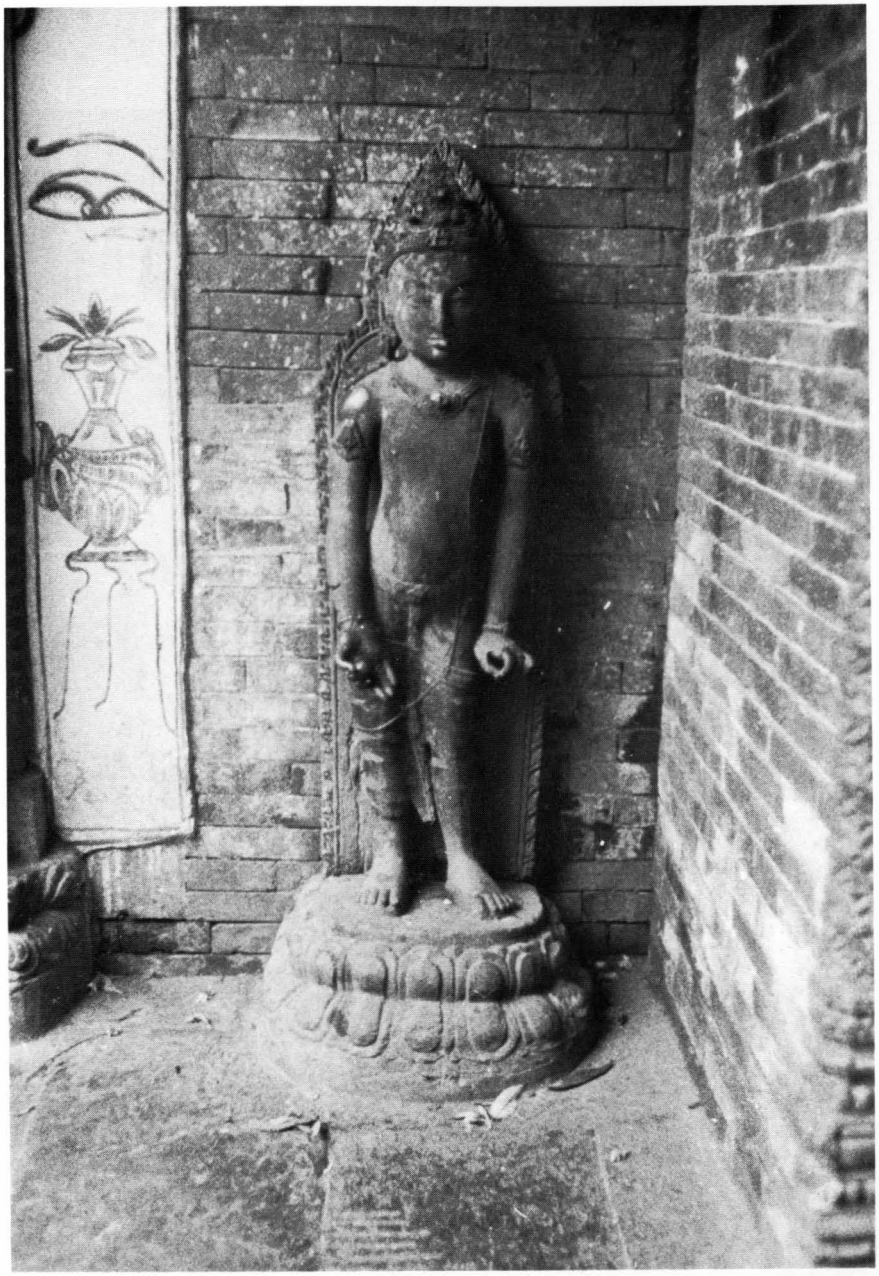
203. Vajrapāṇi, Coll. Christian Humann (New York), 8th century.

204. Vajrapāṇi, Naga baha (Patan), 8th century.

205. Vajrapāṇi, National Museum (New Delhi), 11th century.

206. Mañjuśrī, Nalanda, National Museum (New Delhi), 10th century.

207. Mañjuśrī, Coll. Doris Wiener, 11th century.



208. Mañjuśrī, Kwa bahal, 14th century.

209. Dharmaśaṅkhasamādhi Mañjuśrī, Coll. Alice Heeramaneck (New York), 11th century.

210. Dharmaśaṅkhasamādhi Mañjuśrī, National Museum (New Delhi), 11th century.

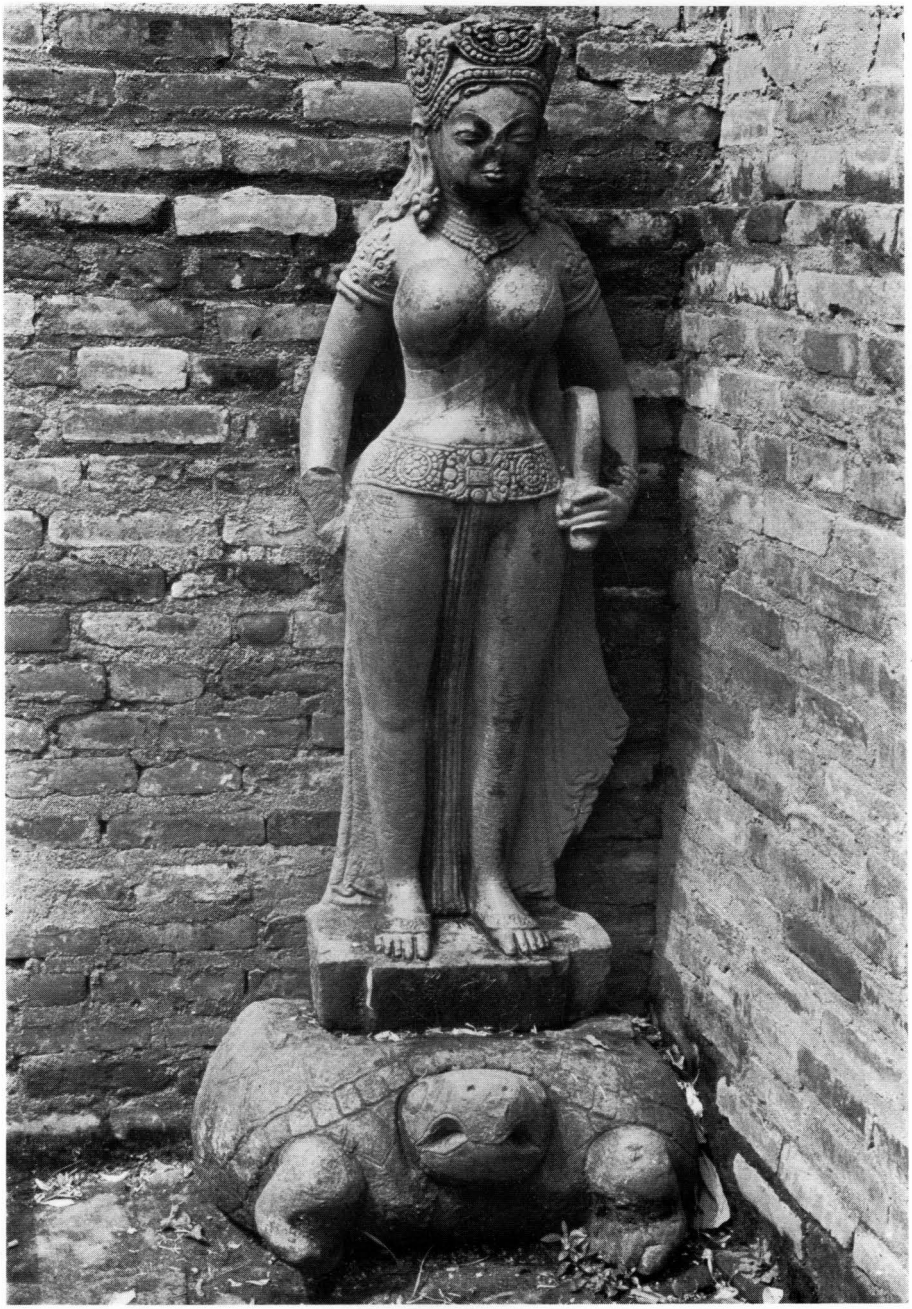
211. Avalokiteśvara, Kashmir (India), Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, 10th century.

212. Maitreya, Coll. John Ford (Baltimore), ca. A.D. 1200.

213. Vajrasattva, British Museum, ca. A.D. 1400.

214. Mañjuśrī, Cleveland Museum of Art, The Norweb Collection, ca. A.D. 1400.

215. Mother Goddesses, Bāghbhairava temple (Kirtipur), 3rd–4th century.



216. Devī, Pashupatinath, 7th century.

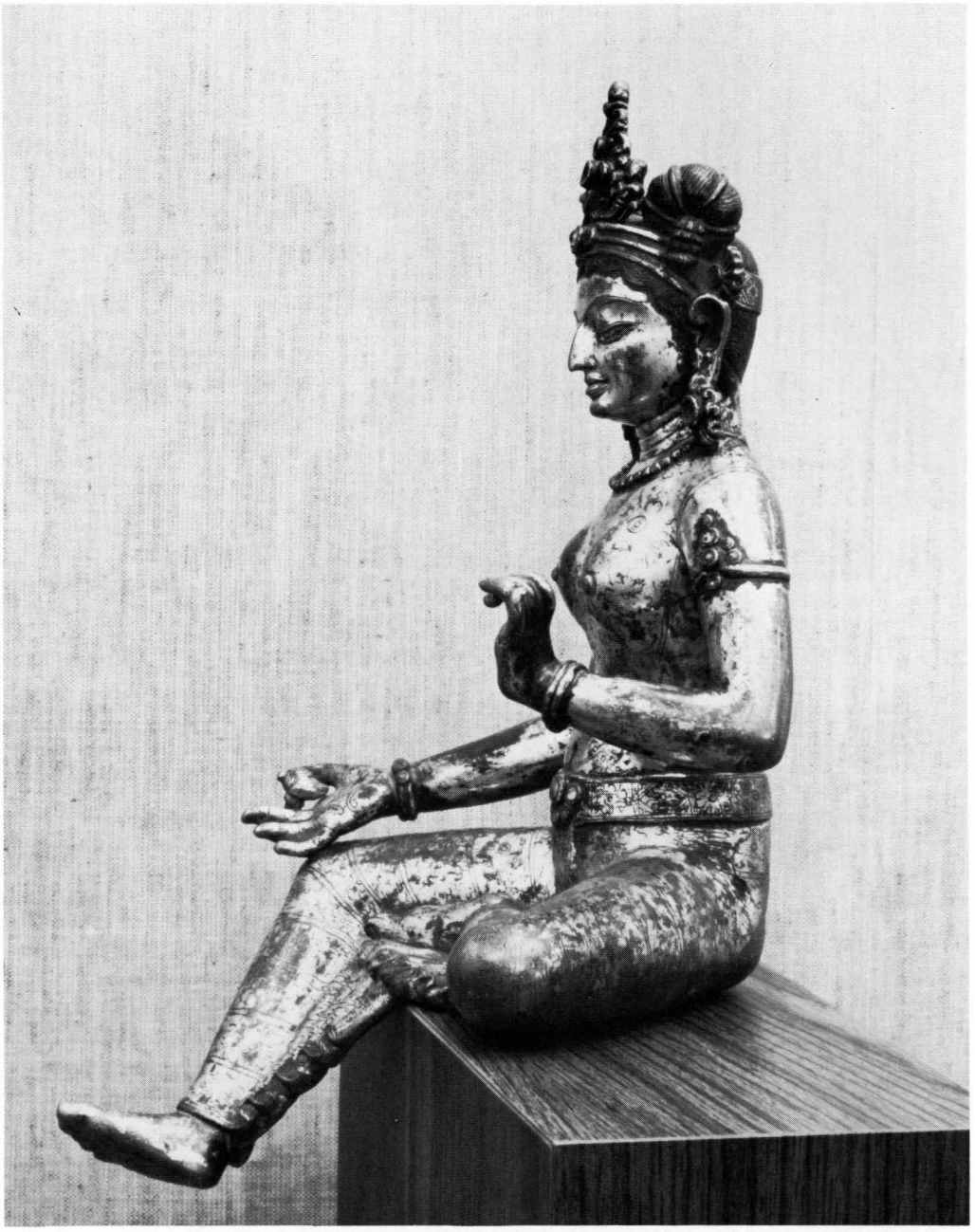
217. Another view of Fig. 216.

218. Devī, Coll. George P. Bickford (Cleveland), 8th century.

219. Tārā, Sarnath, National Museum (New Delhi), 8th century.

220. Tārā, Bihar, Indian Museum, 8th-9th century.

221. Pārvatī, Bihar, Indian Museum, A.D. 1031.



222. Devī, Doris Wiener Gallery, 10th century.

223. Rear view of Fig. 222.

224. A Royal Devotee, Bharat Kala Bhavan (Varanasi), 10th century.

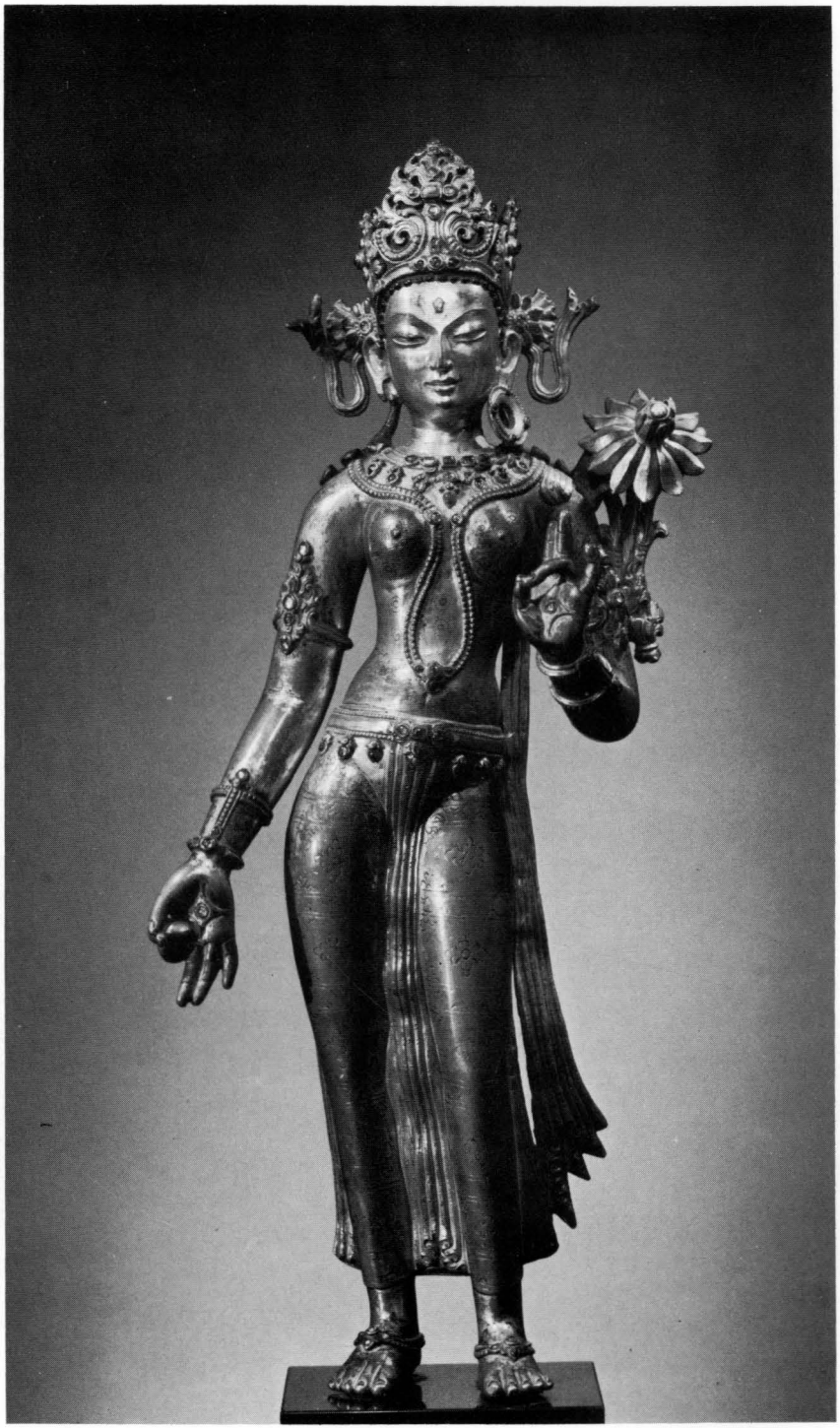
225. Rear view of Fig. 224.

226. Devī, Newark Museum, Members Fund, 11th century.

227. Lakṣmī, National Museum (Kathmandu), 10th-11th century.

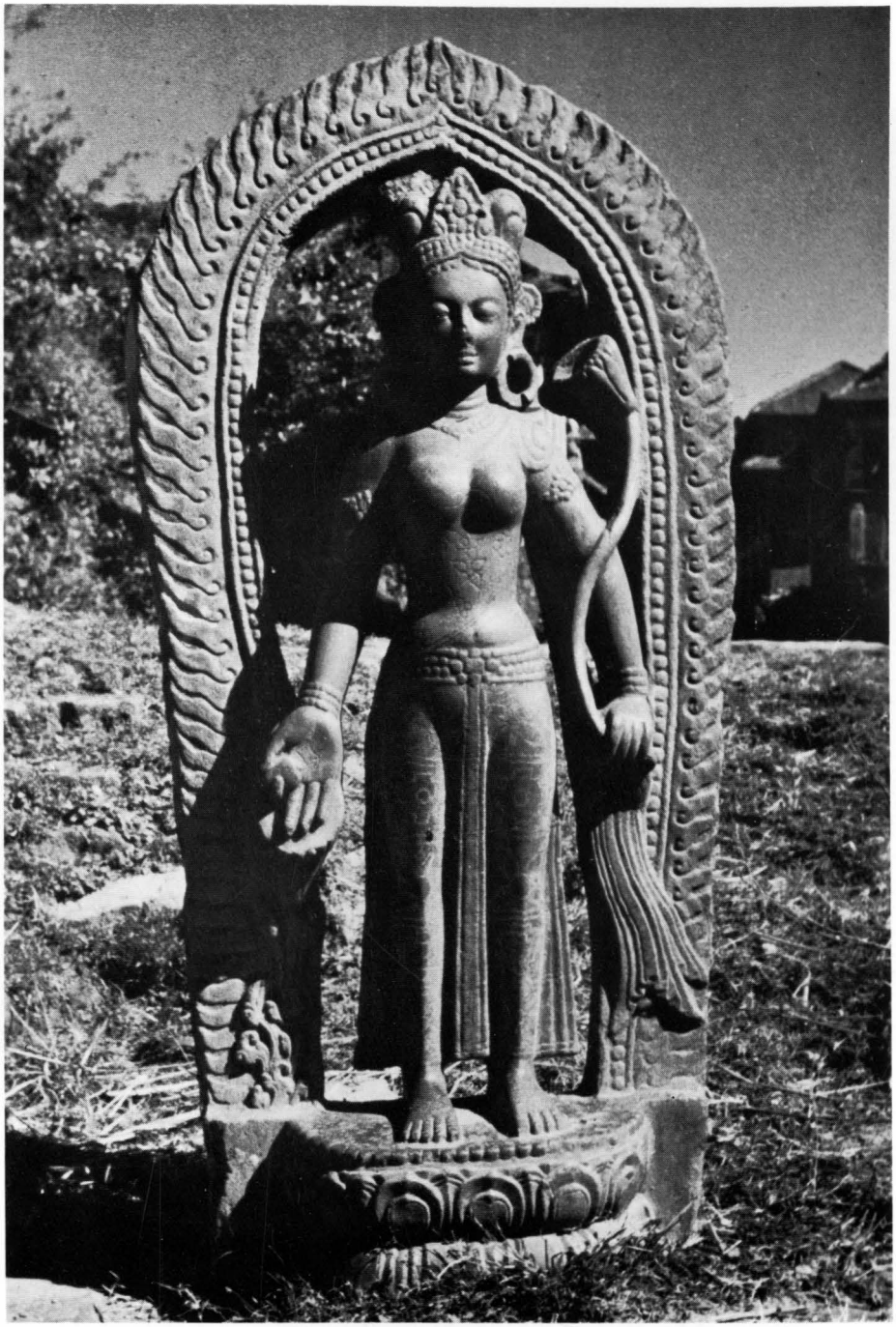
228. Devī, Pashupatinath, 15th century.

229. Devī, British Museum, 11th-12th century.



230. Devī, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), Louis V. Bell Fund 1966, 14th century.

231. Devī, Nala, 13th century.

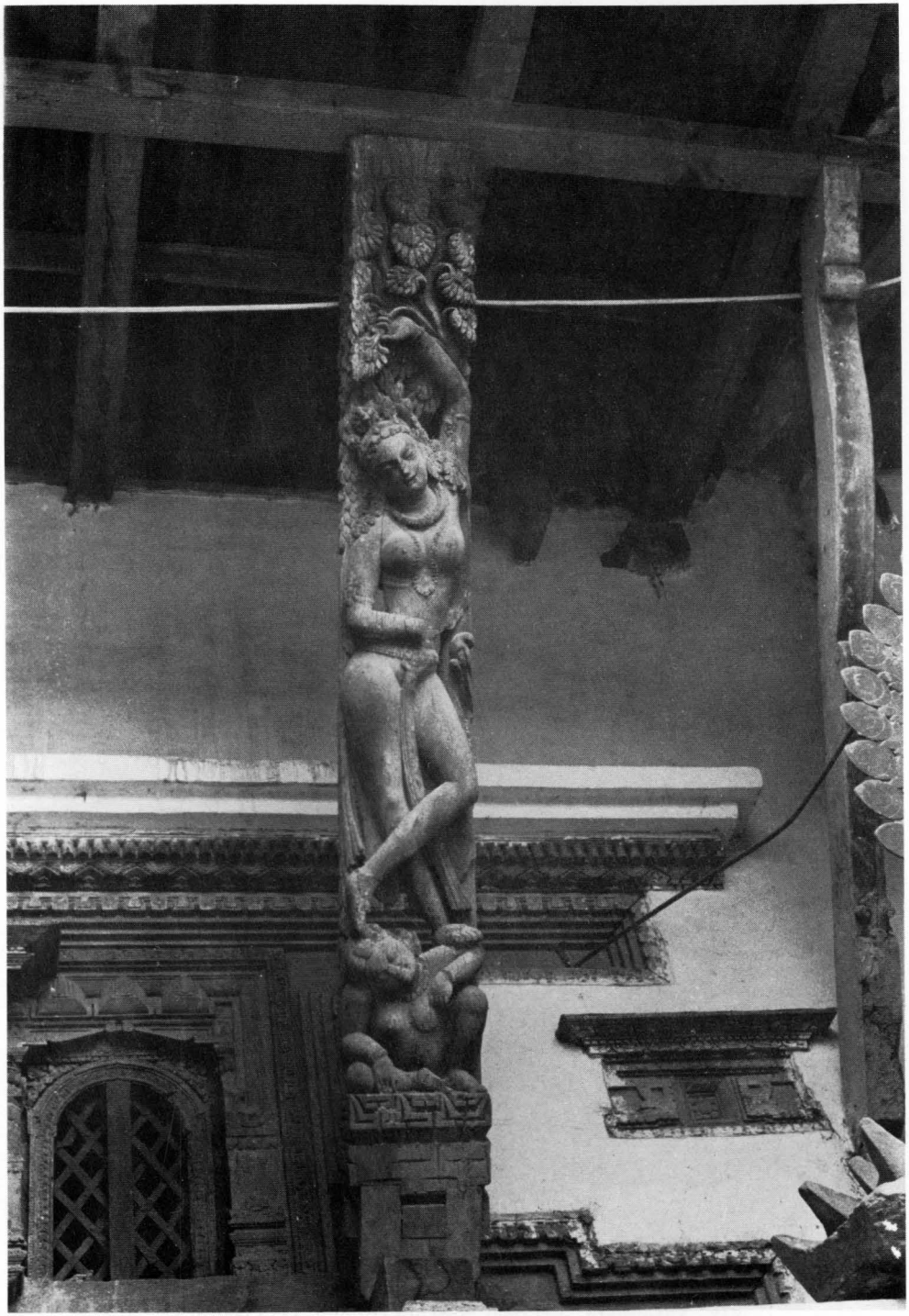


232. Devī, Banepa, 14th century.

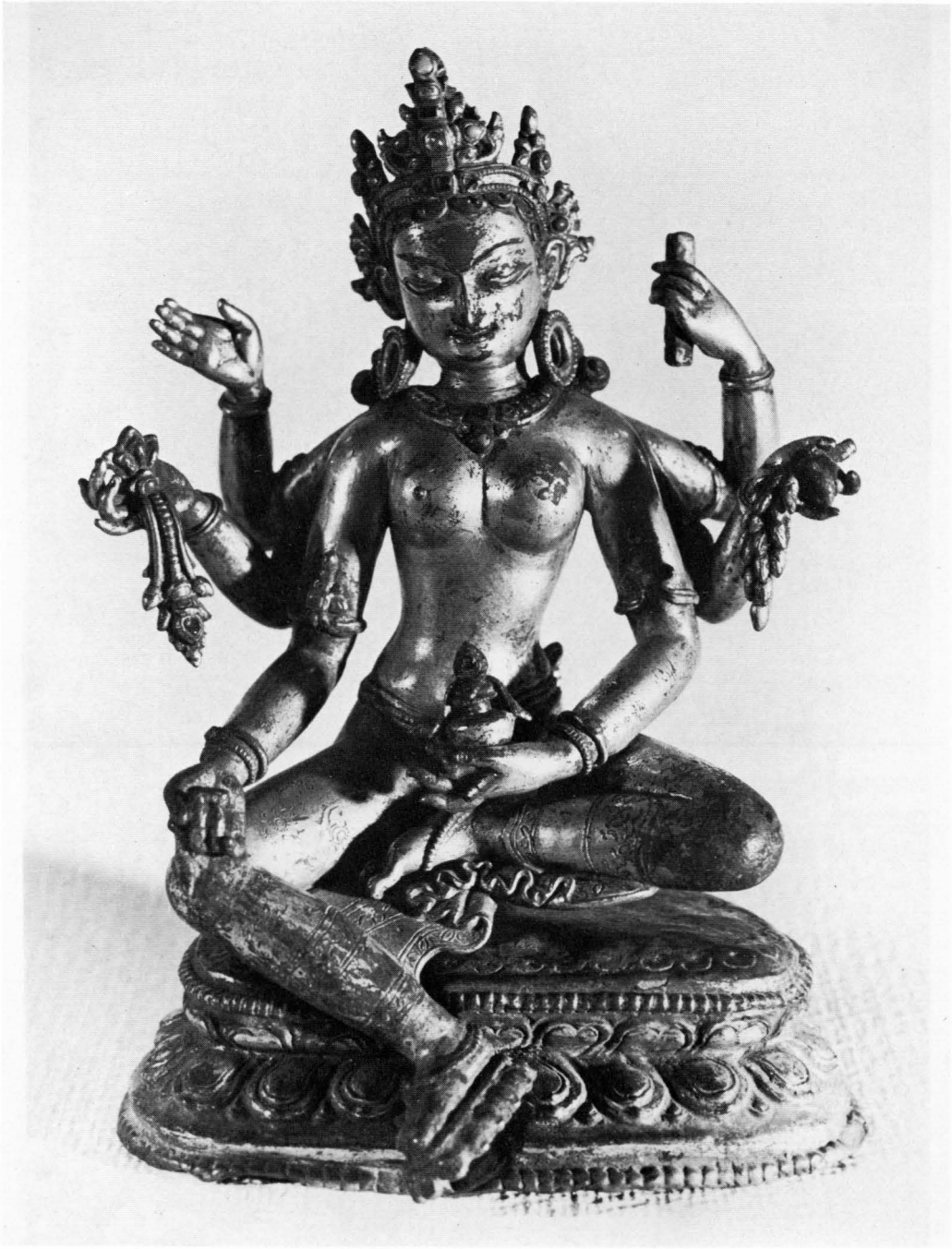
233. Devī, Newark Museum, Albert L. Shelton Coll., 15th century.

234. Vatsaleśvarī, Pashupatinath, 12th century.

235. Bracket Figure, Uku bahal, 13th century.



236. Bracket Figure, Uku bahal, 13th century.



237. Vasudhārā, National Museum (Rome), 15th century.

238. Vajratārā, Indian Museum, 15th century.

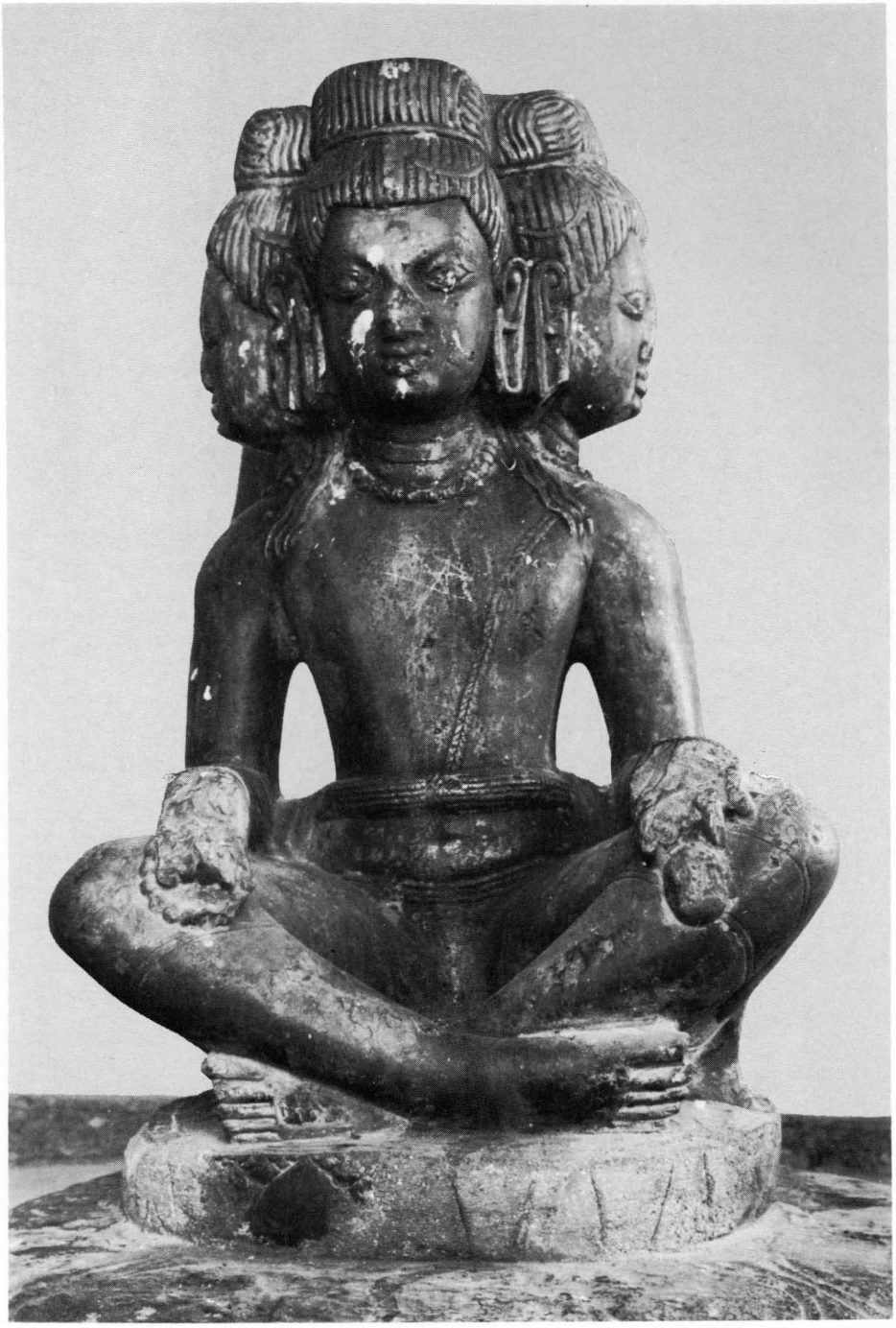
239. Prajñāpāramitā, Private Collection (Cleveland), 15th century.

240. Sarasvatī, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Marshall H. Gould Fund; ca. A.D. 1500.

241. Detail of Fig. 240.

242. Ṣaḍakṣarī Mahāvidyā, Museum of Fine Arts (Boston), Gift of John Goelet, 16th century.

243. Ekajaṭā, Center of Asian Art and Culture, M. H. De Young Memorial Museum
17th century.



244. Brahmā, Deo Patan, 8th century.

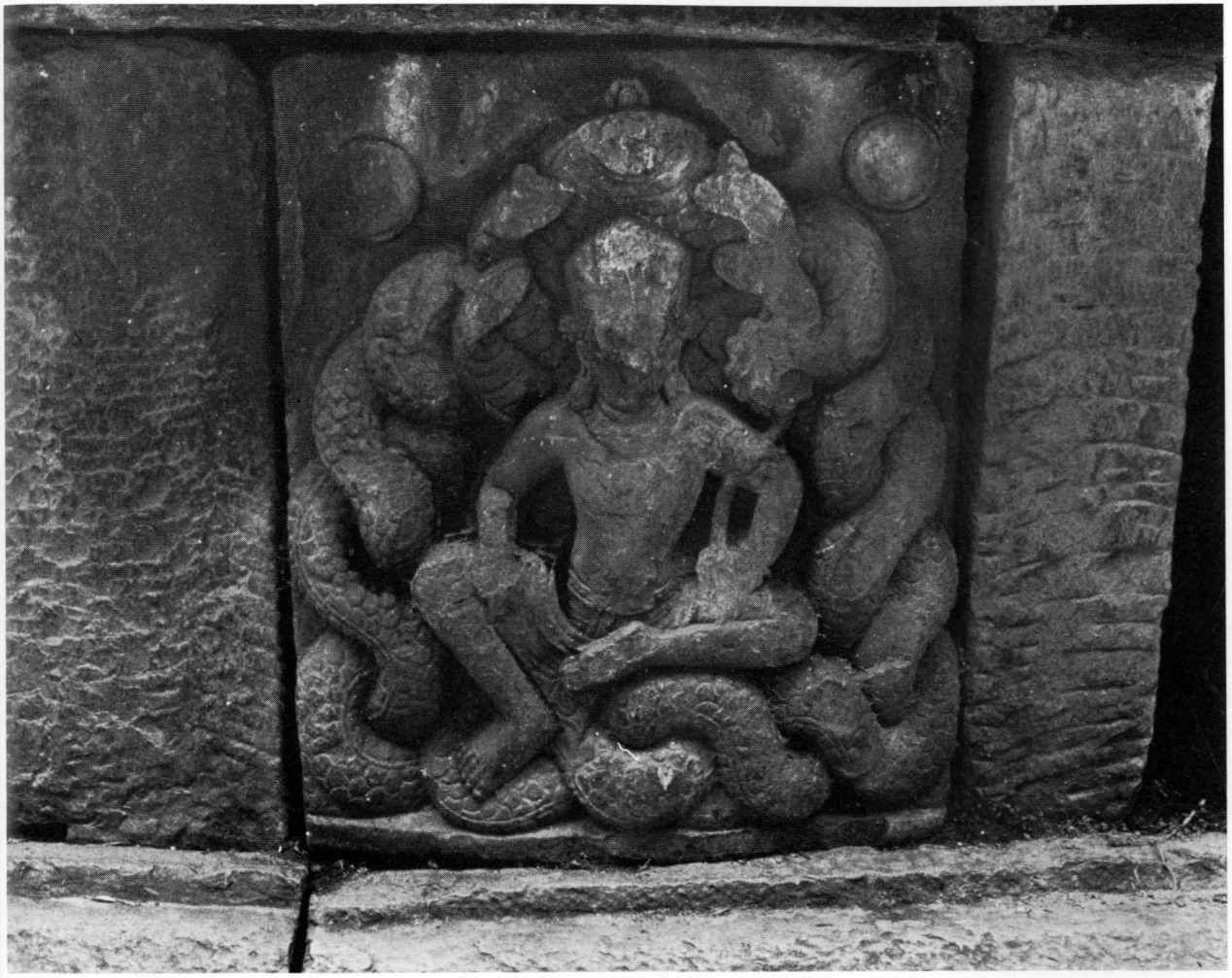
245. Brahmā, Mrigasthali, 10th century.

246. Indra, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Formerly the Nasli and Alice Heeramaneck Collection, Museum Associates Purchase, 15th century.

247. Indra, Doris Wiener Gallery, 11th century.

248. Kārttikeya, Gairidhara, 12th-13th century.

249. Kārttikeya, Harigaon, 9th century.



250. Vāsuki, Tukan bahal, 11th century.

251. Vāsuki, Deo Patan, 10th-11th century.

252. Nāgarāja, Cha bahil, 8th century.

253. Nāgarāja, Coll. John G. Ford, 11th century.

254. Nāgarāja, Coll. John G. Ford, ca. A.D. 1400.

255. Sūrya, Bihar, Seattle Art Museum, 10th century.

256. Navagraha, Bhadgaon, 14th century.

257. Detail of Fig. 256.

258. Śaiva Frieze, Kathesimbhu, 7th-8th century.

259. Śaiva Frieze, Nagal tole (Kathmandu), 7th-8th century.

260. Śaiva Frieze, Nagal tole, 7th-8th century.

261. Śaiva Frieze, Kankesvari ghat (Kathmandu), 7th-8th century.

262. Śaiva Frieze, Police Club (Kathmandu), 7th-8th century.

263. Śaiva Relief, Chandimau (Bihar), Indian Museum, 5th century.

264. Śaiva Relief, Chandimau, Indian Museum, 5th century.

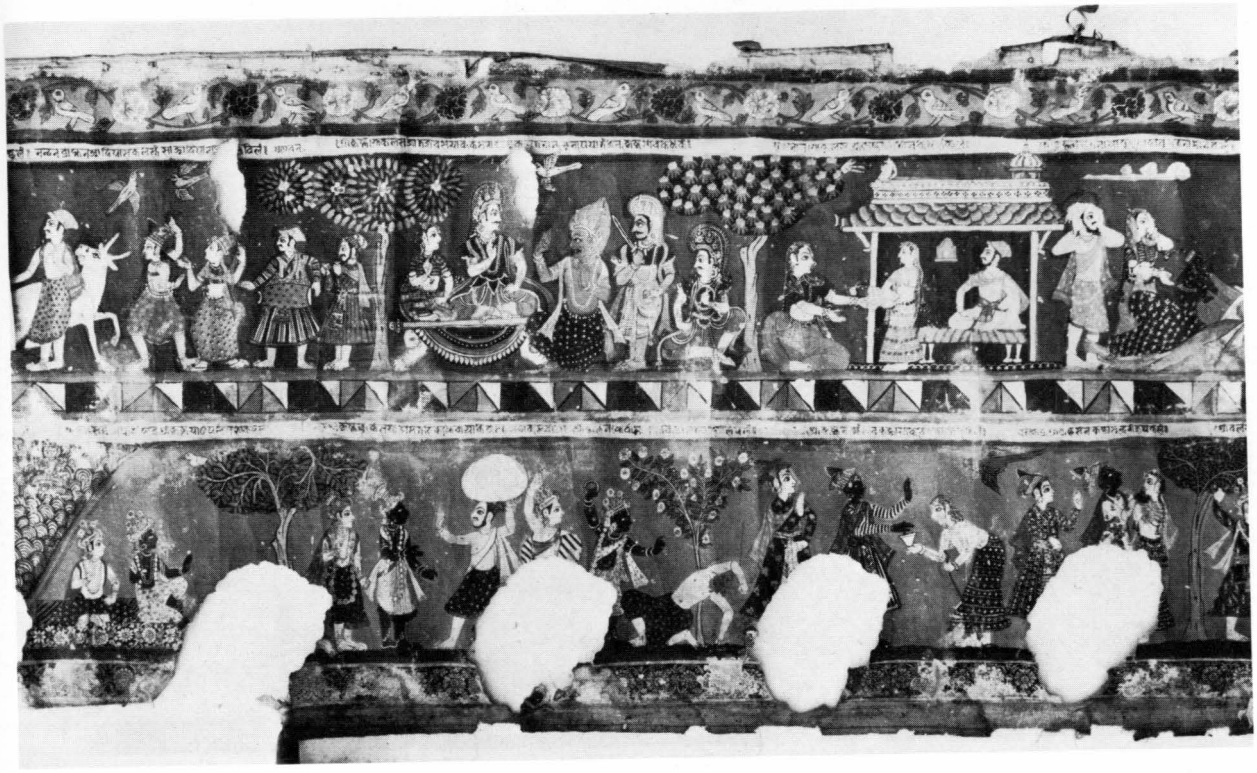
265. *Rāmāyaṇa* Frieze, Nachnakuthara (India), 5th century.

266. *Rāmāyaṇa* Frieze, Nachnakuthara, 5th century.

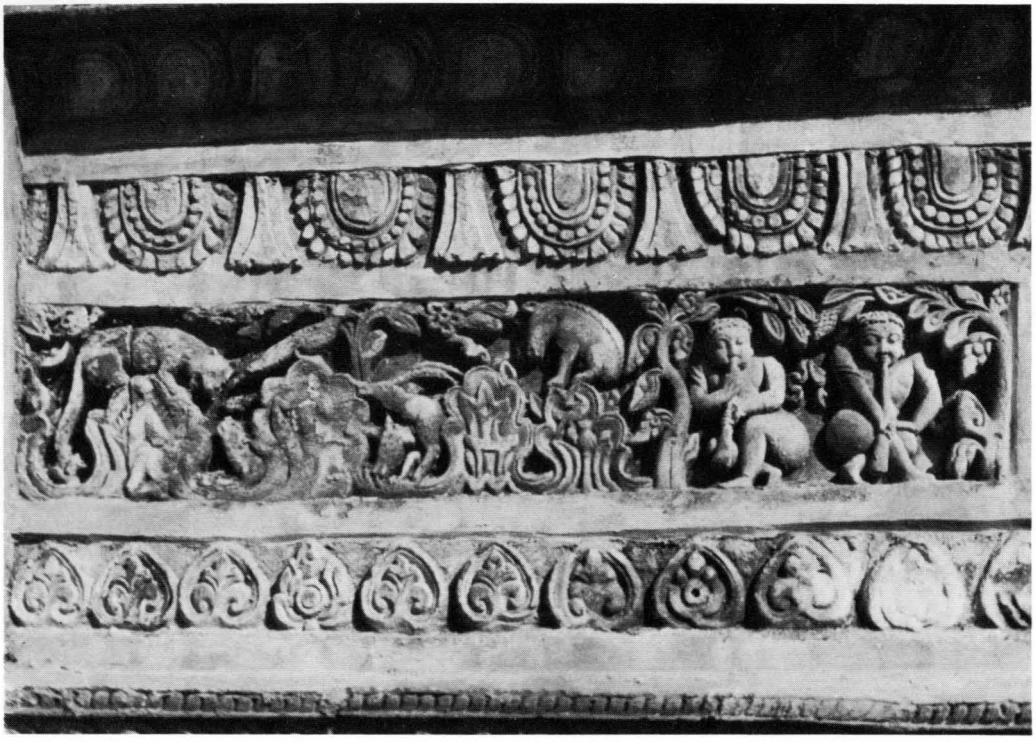
267. Dancing Gaṇa, Nachnakuthara, 4th-5th century.

268. Relief Sculpture, Kṛṣṇa Temple, Patan, 17th century.

269. Relief Sculpture, Kṛṣṇa Temple, 17th century.



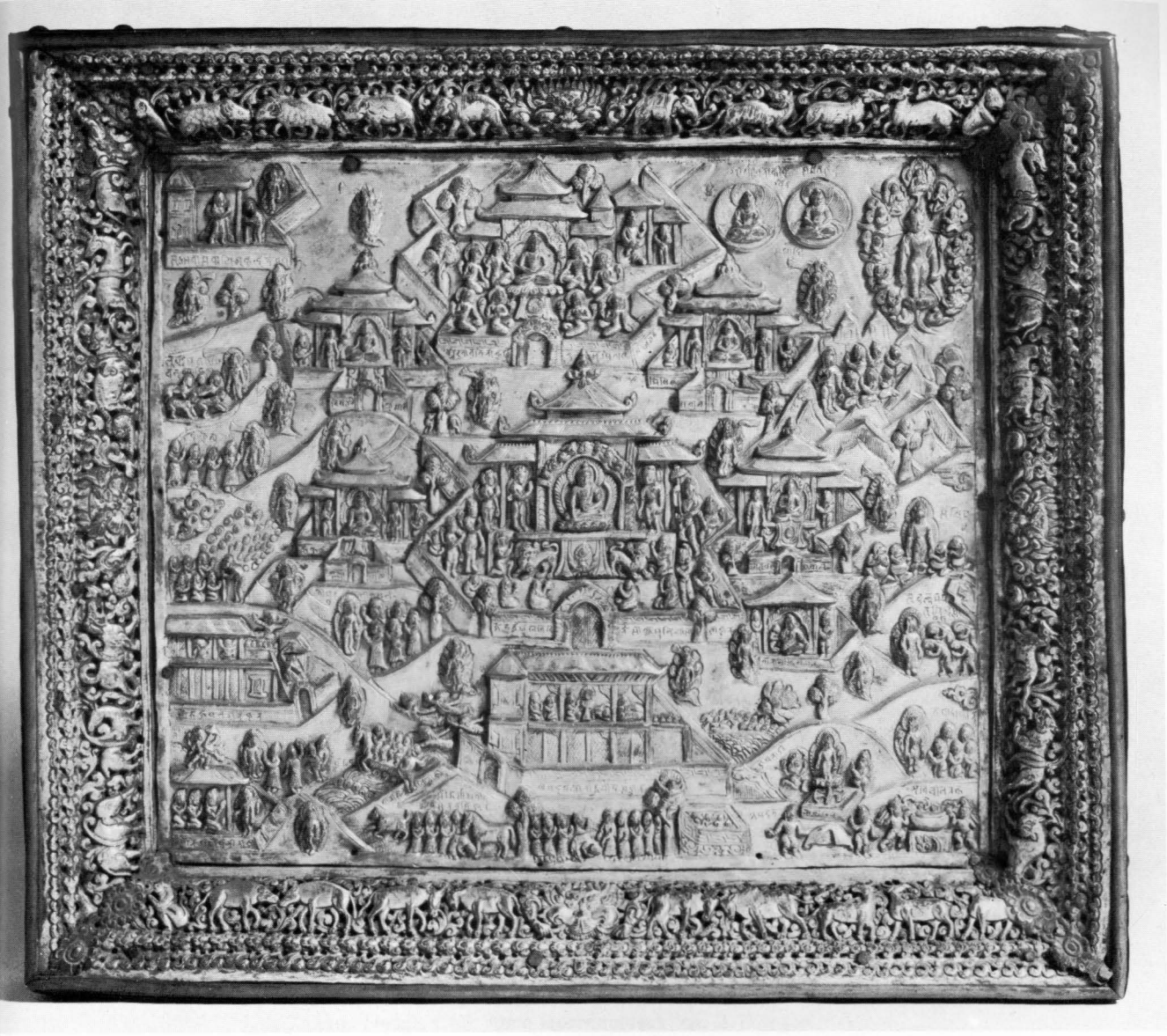
270. Section of a Painted Scroll, Bharat Kala Bhavan, A.D. 1692.



271. Decorative Frieze, Patan Palace, 17th century.

272. Decorative Frieze, Patan Palace, 17th century.

273. Nativity of the Buddha, Center of Asian Art and Culture, M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, 18th century.



274. Life of the Buddha, Center of Asian Art and Culture, M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, 19th century.

275. Durgā Mahisāsuramardinī, Bhumara (India), 6th century.

276. Durgā, Coll. Alice Heeramaneck, ca. A.D. 1500.

277. Rear View of 276.

278. Durgā Killing Caṇḍa and Muṇḍa, Bhagavatī Temple, 14th century.

279. Vajrapāṇi, Coll. Paul Walter (New York), 12th century.

280. Jambhala, British Museum, 12th century.

281. Samvara and Nairātmā, British Museum, 16th century.

282. Samvara and Nairātmā, Coll. John Ford, ca. A.D. 1500.

283. Samvara and Nairātmā, Freer Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), 17th century.

284. Vanakālī, Mrigasthali, 10th century (?).

285. Dancing Gaṇeśa, Bhagavatī Temple, ca. A.D. 1400.

286. Kurukullā, Indian Museum, 15th century.

287. Vajravārāhī, Coll. H. K. Swali, ca. A.D. 1400.

288. Dancing Figure. Denver Art Museum, 17th century.

289. Dancing Apsaras, Indra-chowk (Kathmandu), 7th-8th century.

290. Kinnaras, Police Club (Kathmandu) 7th-8th century.

291. Gaṇa, Bhumara, Indian Museum, 6th century.

292. Flying Gandharva, Bhadgaon, 7th-8th century.

293. Avalokiteśvara, Lhasa (Tibet), 10th century (?).

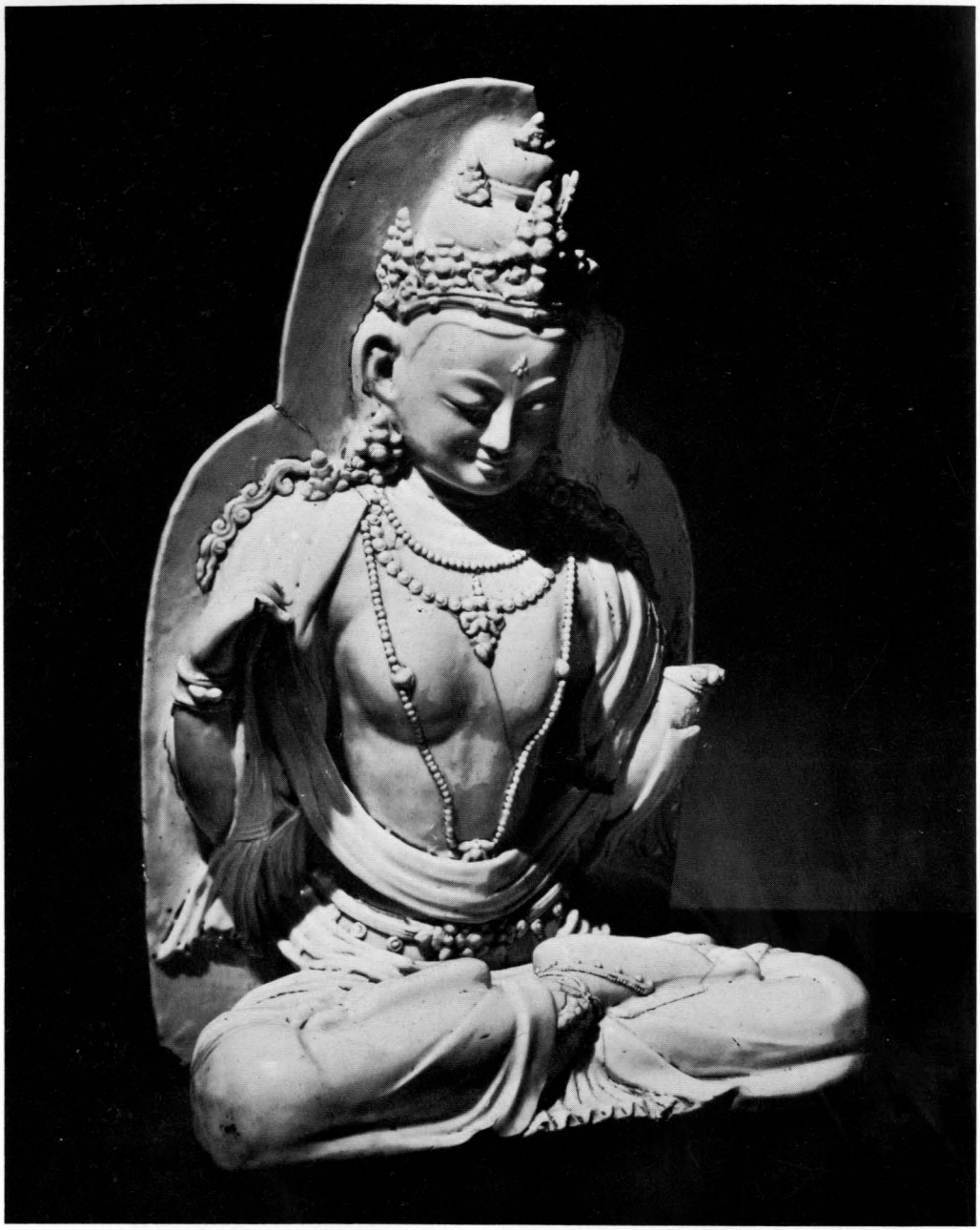
294. Buddha, Tibet House (New Delhi), 10th century.

295. Avalokiteśvara, Tibet House, 12th century.

296. Maitreya, Tibet, Fogg Art Museum (Cambridge, Mass.), Gift—Mrs. Davenport West, ca. A.D. 1600.

297. Vajrasattva, Tibet, Center of Asian Art and Culture, M. H. De Young Memorial Museum, 16th century.

298. Shrine Doors with Bodhisattvas, Tibet, British Museum, 16th century.



299. Bodhisattva, China, Field Museum of Natural History (Chicago), 14th century.

300. Buddha, China, British Museum, A.D. 1403-24.